

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2019 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

Senate Bill 966

(Senator Ellis)

Judicial Proceedings

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Task Force on the Effectiveness of State Crime Laboratories

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This bill establishes a Task Force on the Effectiveness of State Crime Laboratories. The task force must investigate the effectiveness of crime laboratories in the State, as specified; identify shortcomings or inefficiencies in the current system of crime laboratories; and make recommendations regarding how crime laboratories can be improved and modernized, as specified. The Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention (GOCCP) must provide staff for the task force. Task force members may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses. The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by January 1, 2021. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2019, and terminates June 30, 2021.**

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs for GOCCP are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** Chapter 147 of 2007 requires the Secretary of Health to adopt regulations that set standards and requirements for forensic laboratories. Maryland Department of Health regulations must contain the standards and requirements that the Secretary considers necessary to assure the citizens of the State that forensic laboratories provide safe, reliable, and accurate services. The regulations must (1) require the laboratory director to establish

and administer an ongoing quality assurance program using standards acceptable to the Secretary; (2) require the laboratory director to retain all case files for at least 10 years; (3) establish qualifications for forensic laboratory personnel; (4) establish procedures for verifying the background and education of forensic laboratory personnel; and (5) establish any additional standards the Secretary considers necessary to assure that the laboratories provide accurate and reliable services.

“Forensic laboratory” means is a facility, entity, or site that offers or performs forensic analysis. This includes a laboratory owned or operated by the State, a county or municipality in the State, or another governmental entity. A forensic laboratory does not include a forensic laboratory operated by the federal government or a laboratory licensed or certified by the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

“Forensic analysis” means a medical, chemical, toxicologic, firearms, or other expert examination or test performed on physical evidence, including DNA evidence, to determine the connection of the evidence to a criminal act. It does not include (1) a test of a specimen of breath or blood to determine alcohol concentration or controlled dangerous substance content; (2) forensic information technology; (3) a presumptive test performed at a crime scene; (4) a presumptive test to determine compliance with a term or condition of community supervision or parole and conducted by or under contract with a county department of corrections or the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; or (5) an expert examination or test conducted principally for scientific research, medical practice, civil or administrative litigation, or any other purpose unrelated to determining the connection of physical evidence to a criminal act.

**Background:** Forensic laboratories investigate physical, chemical, biological, and digital evidence generated by crimes and civil infractions. Examples of substances analyzed by forensic laboratories include DNA, fingerprints, ballistics, controlled dangerous substances, and suspicious substances. **Exhibit 1** shows the Maryland State licensed forensic laboratories in 2019 and the date the licensed was issued.

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**Exhibit 1**  
**Maryland State Licensed Forensic Laboratories**  
**2019**

<b><u>Forensic Laboratory</u></b>	<b><u>Date Issued</u></b>
Anne Arundel County Police Department Crime Laboratory	12/04/2015
Anne Arundel County Police Department Identification/Crime Scene Section	12/18/2015
Baltimore Police Department Laboratory Section	12/04/2015
Baltimore County Forensic Services Section	3/30/2015
Bode Technologies	12/05/2015
Charles County Sheriff's Office Forensic Science Unit	12/28/2016
Chesapeake Toxicology Resources, LLC	11/07/2016
Gateway Analytical	12/12/2015
Guardian Forensic Sciences	7/04/2016
Harford County Sheriff's Office Forensic Services Unit	1/29/2016
Hagerstown Police Department Western Maryland Reg. Crime Laboratory	12/04/2015
Howard County Police Department Forensic Services	12/16/2016
Maryland State Police Forensic Sciences Division, Pikesville Laboratory	12/05/2015
Maryland State Police Forensic Sciences Division, Berlin Laboratory	12/05/2015
Maryland State Police Forensic Sciences Division, Hagerstown Laboratory	12/05/2015
Mitotyping Technologies, LLC	12/04/2015
NMS Laboratory	12/04/2015
Montgomery County Police Department Forensic Services Division	12/05/2015
Prince George's County Police Department Forensic Services Division	12/07/2015
RJ Lee Group, Inc.	4/05/2016
Ron Smith and Associates Mississippi Laboratory	6/22/2016
Signature Science, LLC	3/27/2014
Sorenson Forensics	3/26/2016
Serological Research Institute	3/09/2016
Office of Chief Medical Examiner of Maryland Toxicology Unit	12/04/2015

Source: Maryland Department of Health

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## **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention; Maryland Department of Health; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 13, 2019  
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