



## DEPARTMENT OF AUDITS AND ACCOUNTS

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February 22, 2019

Honorable Lindsey Tippins  
Chairman, Senate Higher Education  
121-E State Capitol  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

SUBJECT: Fiscal Note  
Senate Bill 19 (LC 41 1783S)

Dear Chairman Tippins:

This bill creates the Public Safety Officer Higher Education Fund to pay the tuition for public safety officers in Georgia pursuing a first associate degree (up to 60 hours of coursework). Officers must be certified by the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council and have been employed as a public safety officer for at least three years prior to enrollment at a University System of Georgia (USG) or Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) institution. Coursework must provide for a better understanding of criminology and law enforcement. Students must maintain a 3.00 grade point average to retain assistance and, upon discontinuation of receiving grants, must remain a full-time public safety officer for six months for each grant payment received. Students who do not adhere to the terms of the grant must repay all money received plus interest. The bill has no effective date.

While the bill would result in additional award-related costs for the Georgia Student Finance Authority (GSFA), a reliable estimate of the program cost is hindered by several factors. We can estimate the number of public safety officers who have been both employed continuously for 36 months and do not already have an associate degree or higher. Unknown is the portion of these eligible individuals who enroll in a USG or TCSG institution while employed, the number of courses they would take, and the school in which they would enroll. Each of these factors impacts the program's cost.

### Tuition Costs

As shown in **Table 1**, we calculated a one-year cost of \$1.2 million if all recipients were enrolled for 6 hours per semester to \$3 million if all enrolled for 15 hours per semester. These amounts are based on the following assumptions and factors.

- **Number of public safety officers** – Of an estimated 58,000 public safety officers covered by the bill, approximately 24,300 have been employed for at least 36 months and do not have an

associate degree. This is based on certification, employment, and education data obtained from the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council.

- **Percentage of the adult population attending a USG or TCSG school** – Using U.S. Census Bureau and enrollment data, we estimated approximately 4.4% attend a USG or TCSG school.
- **Projected enrollment** – Approximately 1,076 eligible public safety officers may enroll in criminal justice and law enforcement coursework. We multiplied the percentage of the adult population attending TCSG and USG institutions by the total number of eligible public safety officers (24,300). Using the percentage of associate degrees awarded in criminal justice and law enforcement across TCSG and USG systems,<sup>1</sup> we distributed the 1,076 students to the two systems. Employed public safety officers may be less likely to enroll in a degree-seeking program given shift-related work schedules than the adult population as a whole, but we were unable to calculate the effect this might have on enrollment.
- **Tuition rate** – GSFA calculated weighted tuition costs per student for six, twelve, and fifteen semester credit hour course loads for TCSG and USG. Weighted tuition costs for TCSG totaled \$534, \$1,068, and \$1,335, respectively. Tuition costs for USG totaled \$1,468, \$2,765, and \$3,192, respectively. We calculated the cost if all 1,076 grant recipients (1,039 at TCSG and 37 at USG) were taking six, twelve, or fifteen semester hours.

**Table 1. Total Tuition Costs Per Semester and Per Fiscal Year, LC 41 1783S**

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Per Semester</u>		
	<u>6 Hours</u>	<u>12 Hours</u>	<u>15 Hours</u>
TCSG (1,039 students)	\$555,044	\$1,110,088	\$1,387,611
USG (37 students)	\$54,356	\$102,380	\$118,191
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$609,400</b>	<b>\$1,212,469</b>	<b>\$1,505,802</b>
<u>Institution</u>	<u>Per Fiscal Year</u>		
	<u>6 Hours</u>	<u>12 Hours</u>	<u>15 Hours</u>
TCSG (1,039 students)	\$1,110,088	\$2,220,177	\$2,775,221
USG (37 students)	\$108,712	\$204,761	\$236,382
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,218,801</b>	<b>\$2,424,938</b>	<b>\$3,011,603</b>

As shown in **Table 2**, we estimated tuition for one student to obtain an associate degree (60 hours) of \$5,340 at TCSG and of \$12,768 (15 hours per semester) to \$14,680 (6 hours per semester) at USG. This amount would be less for students who have postsecondary education credits that can be accepted towards the degree.

**Table 2. Tuition Costs for an Associate Degree, LC 41 1783S**

<u>Institution</u>	<u>6 Hours</u>	<u>12 Hours</u>	<u>15 Hours</u>
TCSG (per student)	\$5,340	\$5,340	\$5,340
USG (per student)	\$14,680	\$13,825	\$12,768
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$20,020</b>	<b>\$19,165</b>	<b>\$18,108</b>

<sup>1</sup> In FY 2018, TCSG awarded 393 associate degrees in criminal justice and law enforcement and USG awarded 14 associate degrees in those fields.

Some of the estimated 1,076 public safety officers may also be eligible for a HOPE or Zell Miller Scholarship. We were unable to determine the number of officers who would be eligible for these scholarships; however, it is likely to be a very small subset of the eligibility population.

- **HOPE Scholarship** – Students remain eligible for a HOPE Scholarship for seven years after high school graduation or GED completion. Therefore, program costs for the HOPE Scholarship could be reduced for public safety officers that are within the seven-year period and meet other HOPE eligibility requirements. If any of the potential recipients also receive the HOPE Scholarship, the Public Safety Officer Higher Education Fund grant could be used to pay the difference between the amount HOPE pays and full tuition. The amount of the difference would range between \$96 (per six semester hours) and \$240 (per 15 semester hours) for each eligible student attending a TCSG school and range between \$371 (per six semester hours) and \$570 (per 12 semester hours) for each eligible student attending USG.
- **Zell Miller Scholarship** – Tuition would already be paid for students who meet the requirements for a Zell Miller Scholarship; therefore, these students would not receive the Public Safety Officer Higher Education Fund grant.

#### Administrative Costs

GSFA estimated one-time and annual costs related to the bill. One-time costs of approximately \$25,000 would be incurred for information technology changes and regulation development. Ongoing costs would be incurred primarily for additional personnel – one FTE for student aid service and .5 FTE for outreach personnel. A loan servicing employee would be needed in the second year of the program. Recurring costs would be \$107,326 in the first year and \$174,477 in subsequent years.

The additional staff would perform tasks such as application processing, eligibility verification, and loan servicing. GSFA stated that employment verification prior to receiving the award and after exiting school are above what GSFA incurs for standard scholarship and grant programs like HOPE. GSFA would also perform loan servicing-related tasks if recipients are required to repay funds due to noncompliance with program requirements. Interest collected as a part of repayment could be used to offset administrative costs.

Sincerely,



Greg S. Griffin  
State Auditor



Kelly Farr, Director  
Office of Planning and Budget