



DOAA

Georgia Department
of Audits & Accounts

Greg S. Griffin
State Auditor

December 15, 2022

Honorable John Corbett
Chairman, Motor Vehicles
131-B State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

SUBJECT: Fiscal Note
House Bill 1479 (LC 51 0166S)

Dear Chairman Corbett:

In the 2021-2022 Regular Session, HB 1479 was proposed to provide that the State Board of Registration for Foresters (SBRF) become an independent, distinct budget unit attached to the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) for administrative purposes only. It would not be under jurisdiction of the State Forestry Commission or the office of the Secretary of State. The bill would also make the board members, who are appointed by the governor, subject to Senate approval. Finally, the SBRF would be authorized to issue cease and desist orders and additional penalties for persons in violation from practicing professional forestry without a license.

GFC estimated an annual cost of approximately \$90,000 for the newly attached entity.¹ This includes one full-time employee at an estimated salary and benefits between \$75,000 to \$85,000, plus additional funds for administrative costs. Investigations will be conducted by existing GFC investigators, meaning that there are no additional costs to the state. The cost of administering and operating the SBRF under the Secretary of State's office is currently offset by biennial fees paid by the 891 licensed foresters at year end of each odd numbered year. These fees are remitted to the treasury. Based on an \$80 biennial renewal fee, collections would be approximately \$72,000 every two years.

GFC estimates one-time administrative costs of less than \$10,000 (e.g., including roll-over of SOS licensing website to GFC, branding, etc.) that will be covered with existing GFC funds. However, it is unclear if the SBRF will need to obtain licensing software. Other agencies that license occupations typically require licensing software, which can cost in excess of \$100,000 annually, but those agencies have significantly more licensees. GFC officials stated that they would be able to absorb the cost of any licensing migration and software needs.

We contacted the Office of the Secretary of State about potential reduction in costs and revenue but did not receive a response. Given the relatively small number of licensed foresters, it is possible that the transfer of the board will not significantly impact staffing requirements for the professional licensing division.

¹ The SBRF was requested to provide expected costs but agreed with the amounts provided by GFC.

Respectfully,



Greg S. Griffin
State Auditor



Kelly Farr, Director
Office of Planning and Budget

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