



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

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Voice/Relay

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April 13, 2026

To: Brandee Ganz
Chief Administrative Officer

From: Anju A. Bennett, Administrator
Office of Human Resources

Ann Koshy, Deputy Administrator

Re: **Council Testimony for Approval of FY 27 Pay Plan Amendments**

County Administration is seeking Council approval for updates to the Howard County Pay Plan for Fiscal Year 2027. As part of the legislative process, these updates have been approved by the Chief Administrative Officer. Before final action by the County Council, the updates will be considered by the Personnel Board.

The majority of the proposed changes apply to updated salary schedules. Please note that recommended changes to collective bargaining unit salary schedules are based on prior adopted collective bargaining agreements or tentative agreements reached with the respective bargaining unit, for which ratification is expected before the Council vote.

One additional Pay Plan change is being made to remove of the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) requirement for Heavy Vehicle Operators (HVOs) in the Department Fire & Rescue Services.

A. Non-Substantive changes to the Pay Plan are as follows:

- Minor edits made at the beginning of the Pay Plan to better organize pay schedules names in the same order they are presented within the Pay Plan.
- Added clarification at the beginning of the Pay Plan to communicate the existing handling of pay plan implementation: "at the beginning of the pay period in which the effective date falls".
- Formatting edits made for clarity and ADA compliance related to accessibility of published documents.

B. Pay Schedule Updates are as follows:

1. **General Salary Schedule**

- Remove salary schedule that was effective July 1, 2025.
- Add the following FY27 salary schedules:
 - ✓ Add schedule that will become effective January 1, 2027. This reflects a 2.0% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) across the salary schedule.

Fiscal impact in FY27 is approximately: \$1.48 million

2. **D Schedule: Howard County Public Safety Dispatchers Association, Local 107**

- Remove the salary schedule that was effective July 1, 2025.
- Remove the salary schedule that was effective January 1, 2026.
- Add the following FY27 salary schedules:
 - ✓ Add schedule that will become effective July 1, 2026. This reflects adding a 1.5% COLA across the salary schedule.
 - ✓ Add schedule that will become effective January 1, 2027. This reflects adding a 1.5% COLA across the salary schedule. This salary schedule will also have a newly added Step 20 in between Step 19 and Year 22, with a 3% increment between each.

Fiscal impact in FY27 is approximately: \$158,000

3. **EC Schedule: Emergency Communication Supervisors**

- Remove the salary schedule that was effective January 1, 2025.
- Remove the salary schedule that was effective January 1, 2026.
- Add the following FY27 salary schedules:
 - ✓ Add schedule that will become effective July 1, 2026. This reflects adding a 1.5% COLA across the salary schedule.
 - ✓ Add schedule that will become effective January 1, 2027. This reflects adding a 1.5% COLA across the salary schedule. This salary schedule will also have a newly added Step 20 in between Step 19 and Year 22 with a 3% increment between each.

Fiscal impact in FY27 is approximately: \$18,000

4. **OT Schedule: AFSCME Local 1810 Office/Technical Workers**

- Add the following FY27 salary schedules:
 - Add schedule that will become effective January 1, 2027. This reflects adding a 2.5% COLA across the salary schedule.

Fiscal impact in FY27 is approximately: \$433,000

5. **OS Schedule: AFSCME Local 3888 Operations Supervisors**

- Add the following FY27 salary schedules:
 - Add schedule that will become effective January 1, 2027. This reflects adding a 2.0% COLA across the salary schedule.

Fiscal impact in FY27 is approximately: \$85,000

6. **H Schedule: AFSCME Local 3085 Skilled Trades**

- Add the following FY27 salary schedule:
 - Add schedule that will become effective January 1, 2027. This reflects adding a 2.0% COLA across the salary schedule.

Fiscal impact in FY27 is approximately: \$285,000

7. **P Schedule: Howard County Police Officers Association, Lodge 21**

- Remove the salary schedule that was effective July 1, 2025.
- Add the following FY27 schedules:
 - ✓ Add salary schedule that will be effective January 1, 2027. This reflects adding 4.0% COLA across the salary schedule.

Fiscal impact in FY27 is approximately: \$1.2 million

8. **PS Schedule: Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 143, Howard County Police Supervisor's Alliance, Police Sergeants**

- Remove the salary schedule that was effective July 1, 2025.
- Add the following FY27 schedules:
 - ✓ Add salary schedule that will be effective January 1, 2027. This reflects adding a 4.0% COLA across the salary schedule.

Fiscal impact in FY27 is approximately: \$289,000

9. **PM Schedule: Police Management**

- Remove the salary schedule that was effective July 1, 2025.
- Add the following FY27 schedules:
 - ✓ Add salary schedule that will become effective January 1, 2027. This schedule reflects a 4.0% COLA across Grade PM2 for Lieutenants, and a 2.0% COLA across Grade PM3 for Captains and PM4 for Majors.

Fiscal impact in FY27 is approximately: \$174,650

10. **F Schedule – International Association of Firefighters, Local 2000**

- Remove the salary schedule that was effective July 1, 2025.
- Add the following FY27 schedules:
 - Add salary schedule that will become effective January 1, 2027. This schedule reflects a 4.0% COLA across the salary schedule.

Fiscal impact in FY27 is approximately: \$1.4 million

11. FM Schedule – Fire Management

- Remove the salary schedule that was effective July 1, 2025.
- Add the following FY27 salary schedules:
 - Add salary schedule that will become effective January 1, 2027. This schedule reflects a 4.0% COLA across the salary schedule.

Fiscal impact in FY27 is approximately: \$316,000

12. C Schedule – AFSCME Local 3080 Corrections

- Remove the salary schedule that was effective July 1, 2025.
- Add the following FY27 schedules:
 - Add salary schedule that will become effective January 1, 2027. This schedule reflects a 2.0% COLA across the salary schedule.

Fiscal impact in FY27 is approximately: \$105,000

13. CM Schedule – Corrections Management

- Remove the salary schedule that was effective July 1, 2025.
- Add the following FY27 schedules:
 - Add salary schedule that will become effective January 1, 2027. This schedule reflects a 2.0% COLA across the salary schedule.

Fiscal impact in FY27 is approximately: \$25,000

14. CS/DS Schedule – Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 131, Sheriff

The schedule covers positions assigned to the Sheriff's Office, most of which are covered by collective bargaining agreement. The pay covering collective bargaining positions reflects the negotiated agreement and will remain in place as previously adopted by the Council. Please note, Grade DS2 (Security Officer) aligns with adjustments for other non-represented employees who are covered by the General Salary Schedule.

Proposed updates include:

- Remove the salary schedule that was effective January 1, 2025.
- Remove the salary schedule that was effective January 1, 2026.
- Add the following FY27 salary schedules:
 - ✓ Add salary schedule that will become effective July 1, 2026. This schedule will amend the January 1, 2026, schedule by:
 - For positions at grades CS 1-3 and DS 5-7, a new Step 19 has been created and added in between Step 18 and Year 20, with a 3% increment between each, and making respective adjustment to the pay scale.
 - Adding a 2% COLA for Sheriffs at grades CS (1-3).
 - Adding a 2% COLA for Sheriffs at grades DS (5-7).
 - Salary scale for Security Officers at Grade DS2 remains unchanged.

- ✓ Add salary schedule that will become effective January 1, 2027. This schedule will amend the July 1, 2026, schedule by:
 - Adding a 2% COLA for Sheriffs at grades CS (1-3).
 - Adding a 2% COLA for Sheriffs at grades DS (5-7).
 - Adding a 2% COLA for Security Officers at Grade DS2, consistent with the COLA for General salary schedule.

Fiscal impact in FY27 is approximately: \$239,000

15. RLC Schedule: Recreational Licensed Childcare

- Remove the salary schedule that was effective January 1, 2025.
- Add the following FY27 salary schedules:
 - ✓ Add salary schedule that will become effective January 1, 2027. This reflects adding a 2% COLA across the salary schedule.

Fiscal impact in FY27 is approximately: \$27,000

C. Removal of CDL Requirement for Heavy Vehicle Operator (HVO) Positions

Remove the position requirement for HVOs to obtain and maintain a federally regulated Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) (currently located on page 48 of the FY26 Pay Plan as Note “D” and used on page 45 for Master Firefighter/HVO and Firefighter/HVO classifications). The language in the referenced Note “D” is reproduced below and is recommended for removal in its entirety as it is not needed for these positions:

- D** Individuals serving in designated heavy vehicle operator positions are eligible to receive a driver premium. Failure to maintain CDL certification endorsements or movement from a driver position will result in forfeiture of driver premium pay.

More specifically, federal regulations administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation regulations (49 CFR § 383.3(d)(2)) expressly exempt firefighters from CDL requirements when operating commercial emergency vehicles in the performance of emergency governmental functions at a State’s discretion. Consistent with this framework, the State of Maryland also excludes emergency fire apparatus from its definition of “commercial motor vehicle” that would otherwise require a CDL. Md. Code Ann., Trans. Art., § 16-803(c)(2)(ii).

In practice, Maryland’s licensing structure further supports this approach. A standard Maryland Class B non-commercial driver’s license (which is not subject to DOT regulations) permits the operation of heavy vehicles of 26,001 or more pounds within the State, and the operation of fire apparatus is governed not by commercial licensing standards, but by specialized emergency vehicle training (Emergency Vehicle Operator Course, or EVOC) along with internal departmental qualification processes.

In addition to the research of federal and state regulations, a review of comparable County jurisdictions within Maryland found that most career fire departments have shifted away from requiring a CDL for fire apparatus operators. Instead, these jurisdictions rely on structured internal credentialing programs specific to the operation of emergency apparatus, including Emergency Vehicle Operator Course (EVOC) training and apparatus certification programs. These programs are already established and required within the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue, as follows:

- All firefighters are required to successfully complete the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute (MFRI) Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (EVOC) or equivalent, as approved by the Maryland Fire Rescue

Education Training Commission (MFRETC) which is specifically designed for emergency response driving. This training provides focused scenario-based instruction on emergency vehicle operations, including apparatus control, intersection management, hazard recognition, and safe operation under various emergency conditions. These competencies are directly aligned with the operational demands placed on firefighters and are not addressed under the CDL framework, which was developed primarily for interstate commercial trucking and passenger transportation.

- In order to become an HVO, a firefighter must first obtain a Maryland Class B driving permit and then begin training in the Department. Typically, training begins with apparatus specific training under Department instructors. As part of the engine qualification process, the member also completes the applicable Pump Operator training and evaluation requirements. Upon successful completion of these requirements, the member may be qualified and credentialed to operate a fire engine for the Department as an HVO. Only after obtaining, at minimum, a Class B license and completing the Department's training program for each vehicle may an HVO be authorized to operate a particular class of fire apparatus.

Removing the federal CDL license will not impact the HVO pay differential, as this premium is intended to recognize the increased complexity of duties, responsibility, and specialized skill associated with operating fire apparatus and is not inherently tied to the possession of a federally regulated CDL. The CDL is structured to regulate commercial transportation activities, such as freight movement and passenger transport, and does not provide training specific to emergency response vehicle operations. By contrast, the County's existing training programs are tailored to the unique operational, safety, and risk management requirements of fire apparatus.

The recommended amendment to the Pay Plan will align County policy with federal and state law, reflect prevailing practices among peer jurisdictions, and ensure that qualification standards are directly relevant to operational needs. This change maintains the County's commitment to safety and training excellence while eliminating a requirement that is not necessary for the performance of essential job duties.

Fiscal Impact: There is no fiscal impact from this change.