

Economic Impact Statement

Montgomery County, Maryland

Expedited Bill 26-24

U visa Law Enforcement Certification Policy (The “U V.I.S.A.” Act)

SUMMARY

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates that Expedited Bill 26-24 would have an insignificant impact on economic conditions in the County in terms of the Council’s priority indicators.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF BILL 26-24

Established under the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, the nonimmigrant visa, or “U visa,” grants temporary legal status to victims of certain crimes who have suffered substantial mental or physical abuse and actively assist law enforcement in the investigation or prosecution of criminal activity.¹ The purpose of the federal legislation, according to the Council memorandum, is “to strengthen the ability of law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute cases of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking of noncitizens and other crimes, while also protecting victims of crimes who become humanitarian/material witnesses.”²

Federal and state law set no time limit on when a crime must have occurred for victims to qualify for U visas. However, the County’s current policy imposes additional eligibility requirements, including a ten-year cap for felonies. According to the sponsors of the Bill, these requirements “effectively create[] unnecessary barriers for victims of crime who may have been traumatized years ago, but whose cases are still under investigation or who may still be assisting law enforcement.”³

The purpose of Bill 26-24 is to remove these barriers and align County policy regarding U visas with federal and state law. It attempts to do so by requiring “any policy directive regarding U visa certification by a law enforcement officer to be consistent and no more restrictive than allowed under federal immigration law.”⁴

The Council introduced Expedited Bill 26-24, Police – U visa Law Enforcement Certification Policy, on November 19, 2024.

¹ McCartney-Green, Ludeen. Memorandum: Expedited Bill 26-24, Police – U visa Law Enforcement Certification Policy. Montgomery County Council, November 14, 2024. See [Introduction Staff Report](#) for the Bill.

² Ibid.

³ See memorandum from the Bill’s sponsors in the [Introduction Staff Report](#) for the Bill, p. 8.

⁴ [Introduction Staff Report for Expedited Bill 26-24](#).

INFORMATION SOURCES, METHODOLOGIES, AND ASSUMPTIONS

As required by 2-81B of the Montgomery County Code, this Economic Impact Statement evaluates the impacts of Expedited Bill 26-24 on residents and private organizations in relation to the Council's priority economic indicators. In doing so, it examines whether the Bill would have a net positive or negative impact on overall economic conditions in the County.⁵

OLO sees no direction connection between aligning County law regarding U visas with federal law and the economic indicators prioritized by the Council. For this reason, OLO anticipates that the Bill would have insignificant economic impacts on private organizations, residents, and overall economic conditions in the County.

VARIABLES

Not applicable

IMPACTS

WORKFORCE ▪ TAXATION POLICY ▪ PROPERTY VALUES ▪ INCOMES ▪ OPERATING COSTS ▪ PRIVATE SECTOR CAPITAL INVESTMENT ▪ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ▪ COMPETITIVENESS

Not applicable

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Not applicable

CAVEATS

Two caveats to the economic analysis performed here should be noted. First, predicting the economic impacts of legislation is a challenging analytical endeavor due to data limitations, the multitude of causes of economic outcomes, economic shocks, uncertainty, and other factors. Second, the analysis performed here is intended to inform the legislative process, not determine whether the Council should enact legislation. Thus, any conclusion made in this statement does not represent OLO's endorsement of, or objection to, the Bill under consideration.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Stephen Roblin (OLO) prepared this report.

⁵ ["Sec. 2-81B, Economic Impact Statements,"](#) Montgomery County Code.