

# HOUSE BILL 815

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By: **Delegates Spiegel, Foley, D. Jones, Kaufman, McCaskill, Palakovich Carr, Vogel, Wolek, and Wu**

Introduced and read first time: January 31, 2024

Assigned to: Appropriations and Ways and Means

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Economic Development – Maryland Financial Empowerment Center Network**  
3 **Pilot Program – Establishment**

4 FOR the purpose of establishing the Maryland Financial Empowerment Center Network  
5 Pilot Program in the Department of Commerce; and generally relating to the  
6 Maryland Financial Empowerment Center Network Pilot Program.

7 BY adding to

8 Article – Economic Development

9 Section 5–2501 through 5–2505 to be under the new subtitle “Subtitle 25. Maryland  
10 Financial Empowerment Center Network Pilot Program”

11 Annotated Code of Maryland

12 (2018 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

13 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
14 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

15 **Article – Economic Development**

16 **SUBTITLE 25. MARYLAND FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT CENTER NETWORK PILOT**  
17 **PROGRAM.**

18 **5–2501.**

19 **(A) IN THIS SUBTITLE THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS**  
20 **INDICATED.**

21 **(B) “CENTER” MEANS A FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT CENTER ESTABLISHED**  
22 **UNDER THE PILOT PROGRAM.**

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 (C) "PILOT PROGRAM" MEANS THE FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT CENTER  
2 NETWORK PILOT PROGRAM.

3 5-2502.

4 (A) THERE IS A MARYLAND FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT CENTER NETWORK  
5 PILOT PROGRAM.

6 (B) THE PURPOSE OF THE PILOT PROGRAM IS TO ESTABLISH A STATEWIDE  
7 NETWORK OF FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT CENTERS IN DIFFERENT REGIONS OF THE  
8 STATE.

9 (C) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL IMPLEMENT AND ADMINISTER THE PILOT  
10 PROGRAM.

11 5-2503.

12 (A) (1) EACH CENTER SHALL PROVIDE ONE-ON-ONE FINANCIAL  
13 COUNSELING AND COACHING SERVICES FREE OF CHARGE, INCLUDING:

14 (I) INFORMATION ON HOW TO:

- 15 1. INCREASE SAVINGS;
- 16 2. PAY DOWN DEBT;
- 17 3. ACCESS BANKING; AND
- 18 4. IMPROVE CREDIT SCORES; AND

19 (II) TAX PREPARATION ASSISTANCE.

20 (2) EACH CENTER SHALL MAKE THE INFORMATION PROVIDED UNDER  
21 THIS SUBSECTION AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH, SPANISH, AND ANY OTHER LANGUAGE  
22 REQUIRED BY THE DEPARTMENT.

23 (B) EACH FINANCIAL COUNSELOR EMPLOYED BY A CENTER SHALL  
24 COMPLETE TRAINING THAT MEETS OR EXCEEDS THE FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT  
25 CENTER COUNSELOR TRAINING STANDARDS DEVELOPED BY THE CITIES FOR  
26 FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT FUND.

27 5-2504.

1           **FOR FISCAL YEARS 2026 AND 2027, THE GOVERNOR SHALL INCLUDE IN THE**  
2 **ANNUAL BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION TO THE DEPARTMENT IN AN AMOUNT**  
3 **SUFFICIENT TO COVER THE COSTS OF THE PILOT PROGRAM.**

4 **5-2505.**

5           **THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADOPT REGULATIONS TO CARRY OUT THIS**  
6 **SUBTITLE.**

7           SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
8 October 1, 2024. It shall remain effective for a period of 3 years and, at the end of September  
9 30, 2027, this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be  
10 abrogated and of no further force and effect.