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FISCAL NOTE

Drafting Number: LLS 19-0221
Prime Sponsors: Sen. Coram; Fields
Rep. McLachlan

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Bill Status: Senate SVMA
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Bill Topic: WILDLAND FIRE AIRSPACE PATROL SYSTEM

- Summary of Fiscal Impact:
- State Revenue
- TABOR Refund
- State Expenditure
- Local Government
- State Transfer
- Statutory Public Entity

This bill requires the Center of Excellence for Advanced Technology Aerial Firefighting to study and, if feasible, implement a system to patrol the airspace above a wildland fire. It increases state expenditures in FY 2019-20 and may increase expenditures on an ongoing basis in future years depending on the outcome of the study.

Appropriation Summary: For FY 2019-20, the bill requires a General Fund appropriation of \$350,000 to the Department of Public Safety.

Fiscal Note Status: The fiscal note reflects the introduced bill, recommended by the Wildfire Matters Review Committee.

Table 1
State Fiscal Impacts Under Bill 1

Table with 3 columns: Category, FY 2019-20, FY 2020-21. Rows include Revenue, Expenditure (General Fund), Transfer, and TABOR Refund.

## **Summary of Legislation**

This bill requires the Center of Excellence for Advanced Technology Aerial Firefighting (COE) in the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to study and, if feasible, implement a system to patrol the airspace above a wildland fire. The patrol system must be capable of determining whether the airspace above wildland fires is clear of obstacles such as private unmanned aircraft systems (drones) that might interfere with aerial firefighting activities.

## **Background and Assumptions.**

The COE was created in 2014 in the Division of Fire Prevention and Control in the DPS to protect the citizens, land, and resources in Colorado by researching, testing, and evaluating new and existing technologies that support sustainable, effective, and efficient aerial firefighting techniques. According to the COE, there were five incidents of drones delaying or disrupting aerial fire suppression activities in 2018. Currently, the detection of drones is done through visual observation.

Currently two types of technologies are most commonly used to detect drones. These systems use radio tracking or radar based tracking technology. It is assumed that the COE will study both types of systems and make a recommendation about the use and implementation requirements of each. The impacts identified in this analysis are for the study of such systems. It is further assumed that any appropriation to cover the implementation of such a system, if needed, will be requested through the annual budget process, once this study is complete.

## **State Expenditures**

For FY 2019-20 only, this bill increases costs in the DPS by \$350,000 General Fund to study systems to patrol the airspace above wildland fires. Costs assume that two systems will be purchased, tested, and evaluated: one radio frequency system and one radar system. The total cost for both systems is \$300,000. Other costs are assumed to be \$50,000, and includes \$30,000 for hardware and \$20,000 for vendor evaluation and travel costs. At the time of this writing no such system is available to be leased, rented, or borrowed.

This bill also increases workload for the COE to work with vendors and to conduct the study, however this workload can be accomplished within existing appropriations. Depending on the outcome of the study future appropriations to the COE may be needed to implement a full airspace patrol system.

## **Effective Date**

The bill takes effect August 2, 2019, if the General Assembly adjourns on May 3, 2019, as scheduled, and no referendum petition is filed.

## **State Appropriations**

For FY 2019-20, the bill requires an appropriation of \$350,000 General Fund to the Department of Public Safety.

**State and Local Government Contacts**

Counties            Public Safety