

**Department of Planning and Budget
2026 General Assembly Session
State Fiscal Impact Statement**

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ORIGINAL

Bill Number: HB1219ER

Patron: Sewell

Bill Title: Use of unmanned aircraft systems by law-enforcement officers; search warrants.

Bill Summary: This bill requires the Department of Criminal Justice Services, in consultation with the Virginia Indigent Defense Commission and the Virginia Association of Commonwealth’s Attorneys, to establish a model policy for the operation of unmanned aircraft systems by any state or local law-enforcement agency or sheriff's office and be made available on the Department's website.

The bill permits the use of unmanned aircraft systems without warrant in certain instances, adding instances such as to provide real-time aerial observation of law-enforcement incidents to increase on-scene safety and security, to deliver essential supplies, to provide enhanced communication for emergency personnel in response to emergency calls, to capture digital documentation of a crime scene or response to a public safety call for service only when such crime scene or call for service is located on public property, and to aerially survey public property incident to a call for service for purposes of locating and identifying any persons of interest while a law-enforcement officer is physically en route to such location. The bill permits the use of unmanned aircraft systems without warrant for fire and rescue operations.

Budget Amendment Necessary: Yes

Items Impacted: Item 391

Explanation: See below.

Fiscal Summary: The Department of Criminal Justice Services anticipates a fiscal impact as a result of this proposal.

General Fund Expenditure Impact:

<u>Agency</u>	<u>FY2026</u>	<u>FY2027</u>	<u>FY2028</u>	<u>FY2029</u>	<u>FY2030</u>	<u>FY2031</u>
Dept. of Criminal Justice Services	\$0	\$125,124	\$125,124	\$125,124	\$125,124	\$125,124
TOTAL	\$0	\$125,124	\$125,124	\$125,124	\$125,124	\$125,124

Position Impact:

<u>Agency</u>	<u>FY2026</u>	<u>FY2027</u>	<u>FY2028</u>	<u>FY2029</u>	<u>FY2030</u>	<u>FY2031</u>
Dept. of Criminal Justice Services	0	1	1	1	1	1

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TOTAL	0	1	1	1	1	1
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Fiscal Analysis: The Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) anticipates the need for one position to serve as Criminal Justice Analyst to develop and maintain the new model policy. The use of unmanned aircraft by law enforcement and other first responders is an evolving technology and there are no current DCJS staff with expertise in this technology. This position would be responsible for developing, maintaining, and updating the model policy in conjunction with subject matter experts in the law enforcement and unmanned aircraft communities. The position will have an annual salary of \$80,000 GF plus \$45,124 in fringe benefits for a total ongoing personnel cost of \$125,124.

The bill requires DCJS to consult with the Virginia Indigent Defense Commission (VIDC) when establishing the model policy. VIDC does not anticipate a fiscal impact as a result of this consultation.

Other: The companion bill is similar to SB647ER. House budget amendment Item 391 #2h provides the funding and the position for this bill.