

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2008 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**Revised**

House Bill 139

(Delegate Stukes, *et al.*)

Ways and Means

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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**Task Force to Study Issues Related to Students Subject to Multiple Suspensions**

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This bill establishes a Task Force to Study Issues Related to Students Subject to Multiple Suspensions to study the feasibility and fiscal impact of requiring student services teams to provide case management to students who incur suspensions that result in 10 or more days of absences during a school year. The task force must make recommendations about this requirement and about parental involvement in matters related to student suspensions. The Maryland State Department of Education has to provide staff support, and a final report is due by January 15, 2009.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2008 and terminates May 31, 2009.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Task force travel reimbursements and staffing costs are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within MSDE's existing budget.

**Local Effect:** Local school system personnel appointed to the task force could participate without affecting local school budgets.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** For cause, a public school principal may suspend any student in the principal's school for up to 10 days. The student or the student's parent or guardian must be given a conference with the principal and any other appropriate personnel during the

suspension period. While suspended, a student has to remain away from school premises during school hours and may not participate in school-sponsored activities.

At the request of a principal, a local school superintendent may suspend a student for more than 10 school days or may expel a student after an investigation and a conference with the student and the student's parent or guardian. A student or the parent or guardian of a student may appeal the superintendent's decision to the local board of education.

By regulation, school personnel must consider the need to initiate a referral to a pupil services team if a nondisabled student has experienced excessive suspensions to determine if the student has a disability that requires special education services.

**Background:** Excluding in-school suspensions, 74,518 students were suspended a total of 131,629 times in the 2006-2007 school year. This represented 9% of the student population. Approximately 28,431 students, or 38% of all suspended students, were suspended multiple times. **Exhibit 1** shows the number of students who had multiple suspensions by local school system. Although Baltimore and Prince George's counties had the highest total numbers of multiple suspendees, multiple suspendees as a percentage of total enrollment was highest in five Eastern Shore school systems: Somerset (8.4%); Wicomico (7.7%); Dorchester (7.6%); Cecil (6.4%); and Kent (6.3%).

The most common categories of suspensions were disrespect/insubordination/disruption, which accounted for 37% of suspensions in the 2006-2007 school year, and attacks/threats/fighting, which accounted for 28% of suspensions. Attendance suspensions comprised 8% of the total.

MSDE notes that, depending on the school system, pupil services teams may consist of a school administrator, a teacher, a health service professional, a pupil personnel worker, a school counselor, a social worker, a school psychologist, and/or a special educator.

Currently, a student who is suspended for more than 10 days in a single suspension must meet with the local superintendent of schools or the superintendent's representative, and the student must at least be given a community resources list that can be used to obtain further services. There were 4,415 students in the 2006-2007 school year who were suspended for more than 10 days in a single suspension or expelled from school entirely. Not including those students for whom any one suspension exceeded 10 days, MSDE reports that 6,672 students in the 2004-2005 school year, 6,927 students in the 2005-2006 school year, and 7,133 students in the 2006-2007 school year had multiple suspensions that added to more than 10 days. Data by local school system were not immediately available.

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**Exhibit 1**  
**Students with Multiple Suspensions**  
**2006-2007 School Year**

<u>School System</u>	<u>Students with Multiple Suspensions</u>	<u>K-12 Enrollment Sept. 2006</u>	<u>% of Enrollment with Multiple Suspensions</u>
Allegany	272	9,084	3.0%
Anne Arundel	2,934	71,800	4.1%
Baltimore City	3,713	81,015	4.6%
Baltimore	5,187	101,915	5.1%
Calvert	448	17,112	2.6%
Caroline	203	5,309	3.8%
Carroll	469	28,346	1.7%
Cecil	1,013	15,924	6.4%
Charles	1,237	25,822	4.8%
Dorchester	338	4,472	7.6%
Frederick	1,159	39,482	2.9%
Garrett	40	4,528	0.9%
Harford	1,199	38,666	3.1%
Howard	599	48,148	1.2%
Kent	140	2,226	6.3%
Montgomery	1,738	134,792	1.3%
Prince George's	5,190	125,398	4.1%
Queen Anne's	187	7,460	2.5%
St. Mary's	527	15,911	3.3%
Somerset	233	2,772	8.4%
Talbot	105	4,224	2.5%
Washington	233	21,079	1.1%
Wicomico	1,110	14,390	7.7%
Worcester	157	6,486	2.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>28,431</b>	<b>826,361</b>	<b>3.4%</b>

Source: Maryland State Department of Education

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## Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education, Allegany County and Harford County public school systems, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 4, 2008  
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