

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2014 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

Senate Bill 684 (Senator Zirkin)  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

---

**Baltimore County - Wireless Telecommunications Towers - Prohibition on Public School Grounds**

---

This bill prohibits the placement of a wireless telecommunications tower on certain public school property in Baltimore County, including the grounds of an elementary, middle, or high school. This restriction applies to property granted, conveyed, devised, or bequeathed to the Baltimore County public school system. The bill does not affect any wireless telecommunications tower in existence or for which all necessary construction permits have been issued. The use of any wireless telecommunications tower that is allowed under the bill may not be expanded and, if it is abandoned, may not be resumed.

---

**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** None.

**Local Effect:** The bill constrains a potential revenue source for the Baltimore County public school system. However, since the public school system has no current plans to locate telecommunications towers on public school property, Baltimore County finances are not directly affected.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

---

**Analysis**

**Current Law:** A private entity may hold the title to property used for a particular public school or local school system if the private entity is contractually obligated to transfer the title to the appropriate local board of education on a specified date. The conveyance of title of school property to a private entity for a specified term may not be construed to

prohibit the allocation of construction funds to an approved school construction project under the Public School Construction Program. A county or local board of education may convey or dispose of surplus land in exchange for public school construction or development services.

There is no ban against placing a wireless telecommunications tower on school property.

**Background:** Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) had planned to place a telecommunications tower on school property in return for a \$1,000 per month payment to the system. In response to community objections, the school system withdrew its plan as of 2008. BCPS advises that while there are such towers near some school properties, none are on school property, and BCPS does not earn revenue from any telecommunications towers.

**Local Fiscal Effect:** The bill constrains a potential revenue source for the Baltimore County public school system. However, BCPS indicates that it has no plans to locate telecommunications towers on public school property. Therefore, Baltimore County finances are not directly affected.

Various reports indicate that a local school system can receive over \$30,000 annually for the lease of one wireless telecommunications tower. The Fairfax County public school system, in Virginia, has received approximately \$4 million in installation fees and ongoing revenue from 23 telecommunications towers since the first tower was installed in 1995. Reports indicate that annual revenues from telecommunications towers on public school property in Montgomery County exceed \$800,000.

---

### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** A similar bill, SB 379 of 2008, received a hearing in the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, but no further action was taken.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** *The Baltimore Sun, The Washington Examiner, The Washington Post, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore County, Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services*

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 17, 2014  
mc/hlb

---

Analysis by: Scott P. Gates

Direct Inquiries to:  
(410) 946-5510  
(301) 970-5510