

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2017 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 485

(Senator Serafini, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

Education - Remote Classroom Technology Grant Program - Establishment
(Peyton's Bill)

This bill establishes the Remote Classroom Technology Grant Program to provide grants to public schools to purchase technology to allow students with medical conditions to participate in classrooms remotely if in-person attendance is not possible. The Governor may include funding in the State budget annually for the program. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must administer the program and may adopt regulations to implement the bill.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2017.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase to provide grants to public schools beginning in FY 2018. As discussed below, providing one type of robot for each local school system costs approximately \$84,000 and for each public school costs \$920,500. Under one scenario, expenditures increase by \$100,000 annually. Actual expenditures will depend on the funding provided in the State budget each year. MSDE can administer the grant program using existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
Net Effect	(\$100,000)	(\$100,000)	(\$100,000)	(\$100,000)	(\$100,000)

Note: () = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: Local school system revenues and expenditures increase due to receiving grant funding and using the funds for the intended purpose.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) establish the minimum requirements for providing instructional services to public school students who are unable to participate in their school of enrollment due to a physical or emotional condition. These programs are generally known as home and hospital teaching programs. In implementing these programs, a school system must comply with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, and § 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as appropriate. Concurrent delivery of instructional services and enrollment in a public school must be provided for a student whose physical or emotional condition requires the student to be absent from school on an intermittent basis. These conditions include, but are not limited to, kidney failure, cancer, asthma, cystic fibrosis, sickle cell anemia, depression, and bipolar disorder.

Instructional services must be provided to an identified student with disabilities in accordance with federal and State special education law and regulations, including COMAR provisions related to special education. The student and parents must be involved in the process and are entitled to all rights and due process procedures included within these laws and regulations.

Each local school system must make instructional services available to students who are unable to participate in their school of enrollment for those reasons set forth in COMAR. In making instructional services available, local school systems must consult with the parent, guardian, student, psychologist, physician, psychiatrist, and nurse practitioner, as appropriate. Instructional services must be available to all students during convalescence or treatment time in a medical institution, or therapeutic treatment center, and at the student's place of residence, or all of these.

Background: Remote classroom technology allows students with either temporary or permanent medical conditions to participate in the classroom remotely when they cannot physically go to school. For example, students could be unable to physically go to school due to cancer treatments, surgical recovery, cystic fibrosis, teen pregnancy, immune deficiencies, or severe allergies. One type of remote classroom technology, robots, allows a student to operate a human-scaled machine with a video screen, microphone, and camera. This machine, known as a telepresence robot, allows students to operate independently and participate in group activities and socialize with other students. There are other remote

classroom technologies such as statically placed cameras that allow less dynamic interaction by students.

One type of telepresence robot made by [Double Robotic](#) costs \$3,000, and a three-year warranty costs an additional \$500. In addition to the robot, an iPad and a wi-fi connection are required.

In general, public school students who cannot participate in a regular classroom setting receive instruction from a home or hospital teacher employed by the local school system, or, for temporary absences, work sent home through the student's regular classroom teachers.

Peyton Walton

Peyton Walton is a student from Poolesville, Maryland, in Montgomery County who used a telepresence robot while she was receiving radiation therapy to treat a rare type of cancer. She is likely the first public school student in Maryland to use a telepresence robot to attend classes. The telepresence robot used by Peyton was paid for by her classmates and community members.

State Expenditures: It is unknown how many telepresence robots are needed in the State for all home- or hospital-bound students who would like to use a telepresence robot or to have access to one. As stated above, there is one type of telepresence robot that costs approximately \$3,500. It is unknown if there are other options appropriate for classroom use. To provide enough funds for each of the 24 local school systems to purchase a \$3,500 telepresence robot, general fund expenditures increase by \$84,000. To provide a \$3,500 telepresence robot for each of the State's 263 public schools, general fund expenditures increase by \$920,500. Based on this range and under one scenario, expenditures increase by \$100,000 annually to provide at least one robot for each local school system each year. The actual general fund expenditure increase will depend on the amount provided for the grant in the annual State budget. MSDE can administer the program using existing resources.

Local Fiscal Effect: Local school system revenues and expenditures increase due to receiving funding from the grant program and using the funds for the intended purpose. The amount of grants awarded to each local school system depends on the amount of funds included in the State budget for the program each year, funds requested by the local school systems, and how funds are allocated by MSDE.

Garret County advises that not all students have access to broadband Internet, which is necessary for this type of technology.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 197 (Delegate Luedtke) - Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Budget and Management; Garrett and Montgomery counties; *Washington Post*; Double Robotics; Department of Legislative Services

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