

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2018 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 1110
Ways and Means

(Delegate Arentz, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Public Schools – Health and Safety Best Practices – Digital Devices

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to, in consultation with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), develop health and safety best practices for the use of digital devices in school classrooms by June 1, 2019. By July 1, 2019, MSDE must provide the best practices to each local board of education and nonpublic school for consideration and adoption. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2018.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MSDE can develop the required best practices using existing resources.

Local Effect: None. The bill allows a local school system to decide against adopting the best practices developed under the bill. As discussed below, it is assumed that any costs for a local school system that adopts the best practices will be minimal and absorbable within the local school system’s budget.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: Each local board of education has both the responsibility and authority to adopt policies designed to create safe schools. MSDE advises that local school systems maintain an acceptable use policy for digital devices, including cell phone usage, and implement a digital citizenship curriculum based on State standards and with support from MSDE. Further, MSDE has contracted with Maryland Public Television to develop a video for educators related to screen time and Wi-Fi use, which is expected to be available for the 2018-2019 school year.

Extended use of computers and other digital devices is associated with certain health hazards, including carpal tunnel syndrome, eye strain, and back problems. Many of these problems can be prevented or alleviated by taking breaks from working at a computer, stretching, and designing ergonomically correct workstations.

Local Expenditures: It is assumed that the bill does not require a local board of education to adopt the best practices developed by MSDE. Therefore, the bill does not impose additional costs on local school systems. It is also assumed that MSDE (and MDH) will be cognizant of the potential costs when developing the best practices since there are many affordable ways to reduce the hazards associated with the extended use of computers and other digital devices, such as limiting the amount of time spent working on a device, taking breaks, and stretching. In addition, many design principles of an ergonomically correct workstation can be implemented at minimal expense, such as adjusting monitor heights. Since affordable options are available, it is assumed that MSDE best practices will not require local school systems to install fully customizable workstations, which can be very expensive. Thus, it is assumed that costs for local school systems that adopt the best practices will be minimal and absorbable within the local school system's budget.

Additional Comments: MSDE must provide the best practices to each nonpublic school for consideration and adoption. It is assumed that nonpublic schools are not required to adopt the best practices and that those that do decide to do so will incur minimal additional costs.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Garrett and Montgomery counties; Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Health; Department of Legislative Services

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