

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1422

(Delegates Qi and Fraser-Hidalgo)

Ways and Means

Public Schools - Redistricting - Community Advisory Committees For Student Assignment

This bill requires that within 30 days after a county board of education votes to begin a school redistricting process, the county governing body must establish a community advisory committee for student assignment. The purpose of the committee is to ensure transparency and equity in input and decision making during the school redistricting process. The committee must review and provide input on any redistricting proposals being considered by the county board, and the committee must disband after completion of the redistricting process. The bill specifies membership on the board which must reflect the diversity of the county. Committee members serve during the duration of redistricting, serve without compensation, and are entitled to reimbursement for expenses as provided in the State budget. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2020.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Minimal. Beginning as early as fiscal 2021, State general fund expenditure increase to the extent that the annual State budget includes funding for travel reimbursements under the bill.

Local Effect: Minimal. To the extent that funds provided in the annual State budget do not cover additional local costs, local expenditures increase.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: A statewide system of free public schools is required under State law. With the advice of the county superintendent, each local board of education must determine the geographical attendance area for each of its public schools. Generally, a student must attend the school designated to serve the student's attendance area. However, local boards of education have various policies allowing for the enrollment of or the transfer of a student outside of his or her attendance area, under certain circumstances.

Background: The bill does not specify what does or does not constitute a "school redistricting process." According to the Maryland State Department of Education, redistricting typically occurs in conjunction with a new or replacement school, or an addition that adds significant capacity and would not involve an entire school system, but a cluster of schools. Thus, larger school systems with growing student populations tend to have the majority of capital projects that would result in redistricting.

Anne Arundel County Public Schools advises that it initiates a redistricting process every year. Baltimore City Public Schools advises that while it has not instituted comprehensive redistricting in many years, boundary changes are made as part of its 21st Century School Buildings Plan and annual portfolio review process. St. Mary's County Public Schools advises that it will incur no additional expenses under the bill. Talbot County advises that the bill reflects its current practice and therefore does not anticipate additional costs.

State Fiscal Effect: The bill does not require a specific amount of funding in the annual State budget for travel cost reimbursements. Attempts to cover these costs at the State level will depend upon what does (and does not) constitute a school redistricting process and upon estimating the frequency of votes to begin a school redistricting process by each county board of education. The proposed fiscal 2021 budget does not include funding to cover advisory committee costs.

Local Fiscal Effect: In counties that currently establish advisory committees for student assignment (such as Talbot County), costs will not increase, and there may be savings due to any State funding for travel reimbursements for advisory committee members that are currently covered at the local level.

In counties that do not currently establish advisory committees for student assignment, State funding may cover some or all of the costs associated with travel reimbursements that are currently covered at the local level. In these counties, it is assumed that between county government and county school boards, meeting space for advisory committee deliberations can be found and, thus, the local cost for convening the advisory committee will be minimal.

Additional Comment: Although the bill does not mandate that the State pay for travel expenses for the local advisory committees, it states that reimbursement shall be made under Standard State Travel Regulations and, therefore, this note assumes State reimbursement.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Talbot County; Baltimore City Public Schools; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools; St. Mary's County Public Schools; Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 2, 2020
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