

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 231 (Senator Hester)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**Public Schools - Cyber Safety Guide and Training Course - Development,
Implementation, and Reporting**

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the Behavioral Health Administration within the Maryland Department of Health, the Maryland Center for School Safety (center), and the Department of Information Technology, by July 1, 2022, to jointly develop and publish a cyber safety guide and self-guided training course for specified students, parents, and employees to be implemented in public schools beginning in the 2022-2023 school year. The guide must be posted on the websites of MSDE and the center and distributed to each local board of education. The course must be updated annually, available on MSDE's website, and meet other specifications. Each year MSDE must compile data on the number of staff and students who have received certification or credit for completing the course. By July 1, 2022, specified agencies must report on the development of the guide and training course. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2021.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by *up to* \$1.4 million in FY 2022 only to develop the specified self-guided cyber safety training courses. Costs may be less as explained below. Out-year costs increase due to licensing costs and to update modules for the courses; however, such costs cannot be reliably estimated. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: Local school systems can likely implement the required training courses and report on the implementation using existing resources; however, time and resources may be diverted from current priorities.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The guide and course must contain information and guidance on safe Internet, social media, and technology uses for specified groups. Professionals who specialize in child development and child psychology must be consulted when developing the guide and training course. The guide and course must include information and best practices that promote responsible Internet use through specified prevention and management.

The cyber safety course must be:

- updated each year and available on MSDE's website;
- self-guided;
- include separate training components for students, parents, and school employees;
- offer a certificate on course completion; and
- include a professional development component that satisfies school accreditation standards and personnel certification requirements.

The course may incorporate other State, federal, nonprofit, or public training modules.

A local board of education may offer students credit for the completion of the cyber safety training course. Each year, MSDE must send a list of available online training modules and any updates to online training to each local board of education.

Current Law: Each local school system must (1) provide in public schools a comprehensive health education program with sufficient frequency and duration to meet the requirements of the State curriculum for all students in prekindergarten through grade 8 and (2) offer in public schools a comprehensive health education program in grades 9 through 12 that enables students to meet graduation requirements and to select health education electives. State regulations require health instruction in the following topics: mental and emotional health; alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs; personal and consumer health; family life and human sexuality; safety and injury prevention; nutrition and fitness; and disease prevention and control. Maryland Comprehensive Health Education Standard 3 requires students in all grades to practice accessing valid and reliable information, products, and services. Students receive instruction on cyberbullying, suicide prevention, sexually explicit media, and how media use impacts overall health, among other topics.

All students in Maryland's public schools, without exception, have the right to educational environments that are safe, appropriate for academic achievement, and free from any form of harassment.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures increase by *up to* \$1.4 million in fiscal 2022 only for contractual services to develop the cyber security safety courses required by the bill. This cost includes grade-band courses for elementary, middle, and high school students at \$200,000 each; and separate courses for parents and staff at \$400,000 each. This estimate is based on MSDE's past contracts with vendors to create online courses. These costs could be shared by the agencies tasked with creating the course, or borne solely by MSDE. The Department of Legislative Services advises that, to the extent that existing free modules can be incorporated to meet the requirements of the bill or content can be reused between courses, costs may be less; however, any reduction in costs cannot be reliably estimated.

It is assumed that the specified agencies can support the development of the courses by the contractor and the cyber security guide using existing resources. MSDE has developed and provided training on digital learning standards for students and teachers, as well as best practices for digital devices. These and other related resources can be found on the [MSDE website](#). Therefore, the guide can be developed and distributed using existing budgeted resources; although resources and time of specified agencies may need to be temporarily diverted from other priorities.

Out-year costs increase due to licensing costs and to update modules for the courses; however, these costs cannot be reliably estimated. MSDE advises that the cost of site licenses for the learning management system used to host the courses cannot be estimated without course enrollment information. For the purposes of this estimate, it is assumed that MSDE bears these costs within the overall cost for the statewide learning management system, which is currently under development using federal CARES funds.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Center for School Safety; Baltimore City Public Schools; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Prince George's County Public Schools; Frederick County Public Schools; St. Mary's County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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