

**Department of Legislative Services**  
 Maryland General Assembly  
 2024 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**Third Reader - Revised**

Senate Bill 1077

(Senators Corderman and Hester)

Budget and Taxation

Appropriations

**Public Schools - Appropriations for School Safety Expenditures - School Security Employees**

This bill authorizes the Governor to provide \$15.0 million in fiscal 2026 and \$20.0 million in fiscal 2027 and each year thereafter to the Safe Schools Fund to provide grants to local school systems or law enforcement agencies to assist in providing adequate law enforcement coverage for public schools. The bill also (1) expands the authorized uses of the grant funds to include school security employees and (2) requires the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS), the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC), and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to jointly review the state of physical security in schools and the existing guidelines on school safety every two years. Local school systems must implement school security guidelines resulting from this review. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.**

**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** General fund expenditures increase by \$77,900 in FY 2025 and by \$5.1 million annually beginning in FY 2026, under the assumptions discussed below. Special fund revenues and expenditures increase by \$5.0 million annually beginning in FY 2026.

(\$ in millions)	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
SF Revenue	\$0	\$5.0	\$5.0	\$5.0	\$5.0
GF Expenditure	\$0.1	\$5.1	\$5.1	\$5.1	\$5.1
SF Expenditure	\$0	\$5.0	\$5.0	\$5.0	\$5.0
Net Effect	(\$0.1)	(\$5.1)	(\$5.1)	(\$5.1)	(\$5.1)

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

**Local Effect:** Local revenues and expenditures increase due to the increase in the State grants provided to local school systems and/or law enforcement agencies beginning in FY 2026. Local school system expenditures likely increase, potentially significantly, to

implement new school safety guidelines, but a reliable estimate is not feasible, as discussed below.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

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## **Analysis**

**Bill Summary:** By July 1, 2025, and every two years thereafter, MCSS, IAC, and MSDE, with input from the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center's (MCAC) Mview Program, must jointly review the state of physical security in schools and the existing guidelines on school safety. In performing their review, the three entities must make use of local after-action reports that are required under current law after any critical, life-threatening incidents that occur on school grounds. After conducting the joint review, the four entities must provide guidance for school security designated to maximize school safety and minimize impediments to students and staff.

### **Current Law:**

#### *Safe to Learn Act*

Chapter 30 of 2018, the Maryland Safe to Learn Act, made comprehensive changes designed to improve the safety of the State's public schools. The remainder of this section summarizes relevant provisions of the Act.

#### *School Safety Subcabinet*

The School Safety Subcabinet consists of the following individuals or their designees:

- the State Superintendent of Schools;
- the Secretary of Health;
- the Secretary of State Police;
- the Attorney General;
- the Secretary of Disabilities; and
- the Executive Director of the Interagency Commission on School Construction.

The State Superintendent or designee chairs the subcabinet, and the Executive Director of MCSS provides staff.

The Act required each local school system, by June 15, 2019, and regularly thereafter, to conduct a safety evaluation of each public school under its jurisdiction. The purposes of

the evaluations are to (1) identify and, if necessary, develop solutions for physical safety concerns, including issues with building security and (2) identify and evaluate any patterns of safety concerns on school property or at school-sponsored events.

### *Maryland Center for School Safety*

Chapter 372 of 2013 established MCSS as an independent unit within State government under the direction of a governing board chaired by the State Superintendent of Schools. Five years later, the Maryland Safe to Learn Act made MCSS an independent unit *within* MSDE and increased the mandated appropriation for MCSS's operations from \$500,000 to \$2.0 million annually. MCSS's duties include:

- assisting local school systems to identify resources and implement training for students and parents about relationship violence, identifying the signs of unhealthy relationships, and preventing relationship violence;
- analyzing data on School Resource Officers (SROs) and developing guidelines for local school systems regarding the assignment and training of SROs;
- certifying school safety coordinators;
- consulting with local school systems on safety evaluations;
- reviewing and commenting on school emergency plans; and
- reporting on life-threatening incidents that occur on public school grounds.

### *Safe Schools Fund*

The Safe Schools Fund is administered by the subcabinet, which must establish procedures for local school systems and law enforcement agencies to apply for grants from the fund. The purpose of the fund is to provide grants to local school systems to enhance school safety, as specified, and it may be used only for that purpose.

### *School Resource Officers and School Security Employees*

The Maryland Safe to Learn Act defines an SRO as (1) a law enforcement officer assigned to a school in accordance with a memorandum of understanding between a local law enforcement agency and a local school system or (2) a Baltimore City School Police Officer, as defined in current law.

Each local school system must file a report with MCSS that identifies (1) the public schools that have an SRO assigned and (2) if no SRO is assigned to a public school, the adequate local law enforcement coverage that will be provided to the school.

Annually, the Governor must include \$10.0 million for the Safe Schools Fund to provide grants to local school systems and law enforcement agencies to meet the SRO/law enforcement coverage requirements established by Chapter 30. Grants must be made based on the proportion of public schools in each jurisdiction.

A school security employee is an individual who (1) is not an SRO and (2) is employed by a local school system to provide safety and security-related services at a public school.

### *Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center*

MCAC is the State's only fusion center and is housed in the Department of State Police. Among other responsibilities, MCAC collects and distributes domestic terrorism intelligence and analysis to federal, State, and local stakeholders and law enforcement agencies.

### **State Fiscal Effect:**

#### *Safe Schools Fund*

The bill leaves in place the annual mandated appropriation of \$10.0 million to assist local school systems and law enforcement agencies in providing adequate law enforcement coverage to public schools. It further authorizes the Governor to include an appropriation to the Safe Schools Fund of \$15.0 million in fiscal 2026 and \$20.0 million in fiscal 2027 and each year thereafter. It is not clear whether the intent of the new authorization is to supplement the mandated appropriation by \$5.0 and \$10.0 million respectively (the difference between the mandated and authorized amounts), or by the full \$15.0 and \$20.0 million, respectively.

Additional funding for the Safe Schools Fund may not be needed to meet current demand for funding for the designated purpose. MCSS reports that, in fiscal 2023, \$6.2 million of the \$10.0 million mandated appropriation for adequate law enforcement coverage was unspent by local school systems and reverted to the Safe Schools Fund. However, the bill expands the authorized uses of the fund to include school security employees, which may increase demand for the funds.

Therefore, this analysis assumes that general fund expenditures increase annually by \$5.0 million beginning in fiscal 2026 to provide additional funding for school security employees. Special fund revenues and expenditures for the Safe Schools Fund increase correspondingly under the assumption that all revenues are allocated to and spent by local school systems. To the extent that the additional funding is not spent by local school systems and law enforcement agencies in fiscal 2026, the Governor may elect not include the funding in the out years, or to include less funding, in which case expenditures either

cease or are reduced. If demand for the funds exceeds expected levels, general fund expenditures may increase in the out years in accordance with the bill’s authorization.

### *School Safety Reviews*

The bill offers little guidance on what the biannual reviews entail, but reviewing “the state of physical security in schools” may involve (1) reviewing each local school system’s regular safety evaluations required under the Safe to Learn Act; (2) conducting periodic inspections of security systems, protocols, and staffing in each local school system and a sample of the State’s 1,400 public schools; (3) developing and updating guidelines for local school systems; and (4) potentially monitoring the implementation of those guidelines by local school systems. The Department of Legislative Services further notes that the bill does not specify that the review is limited only to public schools, so private schools may be included as well (although they are not required to implement the guidelines). These responsibilities are likely ongoing in order to reach all school systems and a sample of schools on a rotating basis every two years. Together, MCSS, IAC, and MSDE do not have sufficient staff available to carry out these responsibilities.

Although the bill requires MCSS, IAC, and MSDE to carry out a joint review, this analysis assumes that MCSS takes a leading role in conducting the biennial review, with support from MSDE, IAC, and MCAC. Therefore, general fund expenditures increase by \$77,933 in fiscal 2025, which accounts for a 90-day start-up delay from the bill’s July 1, 2024 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of MCSS hiring one administrator to coordinate the biennial review of the state of physical security in schools. It includes salaries, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

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Salaries and Fringe Benefits	\$70,677
Operating Expenses	<u>7,256</u>
<b>Total FY 2025 State Expenditures</b>	<b>\$77,933</b>

Future year expenditures reflect full salaries with annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses. MSDE, IAC, and MCAC can support the biennial school security reviews with existing resources.

**Local Fiscal Effect:** Local revenues and expenditures increase by \$5.0 million annually beginning in fiscal 2026 for SROs, school security employees, and adequate law enforcement coverage for schools. This assumes that the Governor includes the discretionary increases in funding for the Safe Schools Fund beginning in fiscal 2026 to expand coverage for school security employees, as discussed above.

Local expenditures likely increase further to implement school security guidelines developed by MCSS, IAC, and MSDE based on their required biennial reviews. A reliable estimate of any such increase is not feasible because it depends on what the guidelines require schools to implement. Assuming that the reviews identify gaps in school security systems and protocols, and the resulting guidelines require local school systems to address those gaps, local school system expenditures likely increase, potentially significantly. The increased funding for the Safe Schools Fund is reserved for law enforcement coverage and school security employees and thus is not available for this purpose.

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### **Additional Information**

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

**Designated Cross File:** HB 1336 (Delegate Ghrist) - Appropriations.

**Information Source(s):** Baltimore City Public Schools; Baltimore County Public Schools; Maryland State Department of Education; Interagency Commission on School Construction; Maryland Center for School Safety; Maryland Association of Counties; Montgomery County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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