



BILL: Senate Bill 1077 / House Bill 1336
TITLE: Public Schools – Appropriations for School Safety Expenditures – School Security Employees
HEARING DATE: February 28, 2024 / February 27, 2024
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Senate Budget and Taxation / House Appropriations
CONTACT: Mr. Steve Edwards, Deputy Communications Officer (301-766-8914)

Good afternoon. My name is Steve Ganley and I serve as the Supervisor of Safety and Security for Washington County Public Schools. I am here to voice my support, and the support of the Washington County Board of Education, for Senate Bill 1077.

Keeping schools safe is a top priority in every community across the state and a critical component of providing students with an education that prepares them for college or career. Safety is strongly linked to student success. Students learn best when they are in a safe, positive school environment where they can focus on their studies as opposed to worrying about their safety and well-being.

Senate Bill 1077 will help local boards of education enhance school safety and security by not only making additional grant funding available to local school systems and law enforcement agencies, but also providing the flexibility for the funds to be used for school security employees in addition to school resource officers.

Washington County Public Schools enjoys a strong partnership with our local law enforcement agencies who provide school resource officers for our campuses. Because school safety and security is a priority for the Board of Education, this year it made an investment of just over \$800,000 to hire 19 school safety and security assistants to further enhance school safety at each secondary school in Hagerstown and Williamsport. The return on this investment is clearly evident. These new safety and security assistants have made our schools safer, been proactive in addressing safety concerns, assisted in responding to concerning student behaviors, and helped grow a positive school culture. They each have developed a positive rapport with their respective school communities and most importantly, the students they serve each day. Their important work was best characterized by one of our high school principals whose school has benefited greatly from the addition of our school safety and security assistants. He said, quote, “We’re not policing students, we’re supporting students.”

The additional funding provided under House Bill 1336 will be important in helping to enhance safety efforts at schools across Maryland. Just as, if not more important, is the flexibility this bill will offer by allowing LEAs to utilize resources provided through the School Safety Fund to support school security employees, not just school resource officers as it currently does and from which Washington County Public Schools benefits from through the receipt of a grant of \$324,000 to provide adequate police coverage in our schools. Both school security employees and school resource officers are important components of achieving the goal of providing a safe and secure learning environment for students and staff.

On behalf of the Washington County Board of Education, I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 1077.

Thank you.

Cc: Washington County Board of Education Members
Washington County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly
Dr. David T. Sovine, Superintendent
Dr. Jennifer Webster, Associate Superintendent for Administration and Leadership
Dr. Garry Willow, Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Mr. Jeffrey Proulx, Chief Operating Officer
Ms. Ilissa Ramm, Chief Legal Counsel
Mr. Steve Ganley, Safety and Security Coordinator
Mr. John Woolums, Director of Governmental Relations, Maryland Association of Boards of Education
Ms. Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland