



BILL: Senate Bill 161 / House Bill 200
TITLE: Community Schools - Alterations
HEARING DATE: January 24, 2024 / January 30, 2024 (Appropriations Committee)
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Senate Budget and Taxation Committee / House Appropriations Committee and Ways and Means Committee
CONTACT: Mr. Steve Edwards, Deputy Communications Officer (301-766-8914)

The Washington County Board of Education supports Senate Bill 161, which would authorize each county board of education that has fewer than forty (40) community schools and that receives funding from the Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program for the personnel grant and the per pupil grant to expend no more than 10% of the funds distributed by the state under certain circumstances.

The Washington County community is experiencing an increase in poverty, which has led to a 21% increase over the last three (3) years in Washington County Public Schools (WCPS) students eligible for free and reduced priced meals. Because of the increase in poverty over the past three years, the number of Concentration of Poverty (COP) schools supported by the WCPS District Community Schools Specialist Coordinator has grown from five (5) in Fiscal Year 2021 to twelve (12) in Fiscal Year 2024. WCPS anticipates supporting seventeen (17) COP schools in Fiscal Year 2025.

Given the anticipated addition of five (5) new COP schools in Washington County in Fiscal Year 2025, the flexibility proposed by Senate Bill 161 would enable WCPS to consider adding additional support staff for COP schools, which would help to ensure each COP school is meeting the needs of the students at those schools with wrap around supports and that the schools are meeting the legislative requirements.

Allowing up to 10% of the grant funding to be used at the district level would provide WCPS with approximately \$900,000 in Fiscal Year 2025 that may be used to add a second District Community Schools Specialist Coordinator to support COP schools. But perhaps the most impactful way the additional funds would help relates to behavioral support/health services for students. The additional funding can have a double impact by not just helping students in COP schools, but also students in non-COP schools. The additional funding would be applied to COP schools for behavioral support/health services thereby freeing up WCPS funding currently being used for these services in COP schools to be used in non-COP schools for behavioral support/health services. Given the increasing need for behavior support/health service needs of our students, the additional funding would allow WCPS to contract with several local health agencies to provide access to care outside of the normal school day.

Without this additional funding, WCPS may not be in a position in Fiscal Year 2025 to add these extremely important positions to support its neediest students.

Washington County Board of Education respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 161.

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. Gary Willow, Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Mr. Jeffrey Proulx, Chief Operating Officer
Ms. Ilissa Ramm, Chief Legal Counsel
Mr. Jeremy Jakoby, Director of Student Services, School Counseling, and School Health
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