



FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS - SB1090
Maryland Center for School Safety - Statewide Secure Schools Emergency Response Program
- Established

Maryland Department of Emergency Management
Hearing Date: 28 FEB 2024

Chair Brian Feldman
Education, Energy, and the Environment
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair Feldman,

School safety is one of the most critical responsibilities of the government, and as a Department whose mission includes disaster risk reduction, preparedness, and response, we are deeply aware of the threats that schools face today. It is with that awareness that the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) writes **in favor with amendments to SB1090 - Maryland Center for School Safety - Statewide Secure Schools Emergency Response Program - Established.**

We thank Senator Waldstreicher for working closely with our Department, MCSS, and other stakeholders to identify solutions that will help school staff and first responders respond to critical incidents at schools. Our requested amendments reflect needs we have heard from schools, emergency managers, and 9-1-1 Centers across the State, as well as evidence-based best practices/areas for improvement identified in after action reports from a number of critical incidents at schools across the country.

Requested Amendments

- Alter the program from MCSS-procured program to an opt-in grant program
- Expand eligible costs under the grant program to include installing/updating Public Address systems, intercom systems, and bi-directional amplifiers to improve emergency communications during critical incidents
- Remove the DHS SAFETY Act certification requirement and allow MCSS to establish standards
- Alter the appropriation language from “shall” to “may”



Wes Moore | Governor

Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor

Russell J. Strickland | Secretary

Justification

The Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) led a study this summer after the introduction of the first version of this bill in the 2023 General Assembly session. MCSS convened a workgroup of subject matter experts in emergency notification and response including MDEM, school safety experts from school districts across the State, county emergency management, and Public Safety Answering Point (a.k.a. 9-1-1 Center) leaders to evaluate evidence from past school incidents across the nation. This study was not legislatively mandated; workgroup members dedicated time and effort in order to evaluate school emergency notification systems by a thorough review of evidence-based practice.

After reviewing numerous after action reports, speaking with other states and evaluating the evidence, the workgroup concluded that there were multiple ways to invest in emergency notification and communication methods that would increase school safety during critical incidents, and that there was limited evidence that panic buttons alone would increase school safety or improve first responder response. When lives are at stake, investment should be made in evidence-based solutions to increase safety, and the workgroup makes several alternative recommendations for investment in the published study. MDEM supports investment in those alternatives.

MDEM recognizes that some local jurisdictions have opted to invest in panic button systems, and the Department supports the choice of local school officials to implement safety measures that have been coordinated with local first responders in support of local response processes. However, this bill establishes a one-size-fit-all state procurement approach that may not integrate well with local management of first response procedures. We believe our amendments will provide school systems and emergency services the flexibility they need to meet the needs of their students, staff, and first responders during critical incidents.

MDEM also recognizes that these types of statewide systems have been mandated in other states on the basis that a panic button system provides the opportunity to contact 9-1-1 without having to make a call that may give away someone's position. Only a handful of states have universal text-to-9-1-1, and it is easy to see why panic buttons would be an attractive emergency notification system in those areas without it. Maryland has demonstrated leadership in the area of Text-to-9-1-1 and has had Statewide Text-to-9-1-1 capability since 2020. For those systems with plans in place to



Wes Moore | Governor

Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor

Russell J. Strickland | Secretary

use Text-to-9-1-1 in critical emergencies, alternative school safety measures may be more appropriate for investment.

Lastly, the inclusion of the [DHS SAFETY Act](#) as a required provision of procurement in this bill should be removed. According to DHS, the SAFETY Act, “provides incentives for the development and deployment of anti-terrorism technologies by creating systems of risk and litigation management. The purpose of the Act is to ensure that the threat of liability does not deter potential manufacturers or sellers of effective anti-terrorism technologies from developing and commercializing technologies that could save lives.” There are alternative operational-related standards (e.g. cybersecurity standards) that should be considered for school technology, and MCSS is in a position to work with subject matter experts to identify those standards and incorporate them in the grant program. Leaving out standard-specific language will allow MCSS to update standards as they evolve over time.

In conclusion, MDEM urges the Committee to vote favorable with our requested amendments on SB1090. If you have any questions, please contact Anna Sierra, MDEM legislative liaison: anna.sierra1@maryland.gov.

SENATE BILL 1090

By: Senators Waldstreicher and Kagan

Introduced and read first time: February 2, 2024

Assigned to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

A BILL ENTITLED

AN ACT concerning

Maryland Center for School Safety – Statewide Secure Schools Emergency Response Program – Established

FOR the purpose of establishing the Statewide Secure Schools Emergency Response Program to be administered by the Maryland Center for School Safety to improve the safety and security of public schools in the State by implementing a certain emergency notification system; and generally relating to the establishment of the Statewide Secure Schools Emergency Response Program.

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments, Article – Education

Section 7–1502(a)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2022 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments, Article – Education

Section 7–1502(g)(20) and (21)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2022 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

BY adding to
Article – Education

Section 7–1502(g)(22) and 7–1513
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2022 Replacement Volume 2023 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments, Article – Public Safety

Section 1–301(a), (j), (t), and (u) Annotated Code of Maryland

(2022 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Education

7–1502.

(a) There is a Maryland Center for School Safety.

(g) The Center shall perform the following functions and duties:

(20) Review and comment on school emergency plans developed under § 7–1510 of this subtitle; [and]

(21) Report to the General Assembly and the Governor on life–threatening incidents as required under § 7–1510 of this subtitle; **AND**

(22) ADMINISTER THE STATEWIDE SECURE SCHOOLS EMERGENCY RESPONSE GRANT PROGRAM UNDER § 7–1513 OF THIS SUBTITLE.

7–1513.

(A) (1) IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS INDICATED.

(2) “FIRST RESPONDER” HAS THE MEANING STATED IN § 1–301 OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY ARTICLE.

(3) “~~PANIC BUTTON~~ EMERGENCY EVENT” MEANS AN EMERGENCY SITUATION THAT REQUIRES IMMEDIATE RESPONSE BY FIRST RESPONDERS. COMPELS THE USER OF AN EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM TO PRESS A PANIC BUTTON TO INSTANTLY SUMMON HELP TO THEIR LOCATION FROM FIRST RESPONDERS OR OTHER PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCY PERSONNEL.

(4) “PROGRAM” MEANS THE STATEWIDE SECURE SCHOOLS EMERGENCY RESPONSE GRANT PROGRAM.

(5) “PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCY” HAS THE MEANING STATED IN § 1–301 OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY ARTICLE.

(6) “PUBLIC SAFETY ANSWERING POINT” HAS THE MEANING STATED IN § 1–301 OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY ARTICLE.

(B) (1) THERE IS A ~~STATEWIDE~~ SECURE SCHOOLS EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROGRAM ADMINISTERED BY THE CENTER.

(2) THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO PROVIDE FUNDING TO PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS TO IMPROVE ~~THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE STATE BY IMPLEMENTING A STATEWIDE~~ EMERGENCY NOTIFICATIONS AND ~~SYSTEM THAT FACILITATES~~ COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL PERSONNEL, A PUBLIC SAFETY ANSWERING POINT, AND A PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCY DURING EMERGENCY EVENTS. ~~IN LIFE-THREATENING AND EMERGENCY SITUATIONS, INCLUDING MEDICAL EMERGENCIES AND THE PRESENCE OF AN ACTIVE SHOOTER OR INTRUDER AT A PUBLIC SCHOOL.~~

~~(C)~~ (3) THE CENTER SHALL PROVIDE FUNDS TO LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEMS ~~COUNTY BOARDS~~ PROGRAM SHALL TO PROCURE AND IMPLEMENT AN FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF EMERGENCY NOTIFICATIONS AND ENHANCED COMMUNICATIONS WITHIN THE SCHOOL AND WITH PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCIES PLATFORM FOR A SECURE SCHOOLS EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROGRAM. THROUGH WHICH ALL SCHOOL FACULTY AND STAFF ARE ABLE TO ALERT A PUBLIC SAFETY ANSWERING POINT TO REPORT A LIFE-THREATENING OR AN EMERGENCY SITUATION.

(4) EACH COUNTY BOARD, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY AND LOCAL PUBLIC SAFETY ANSWERING POINT, MAY APPLY TO THE CENTER FOR FUNDS TO PROCURE AND IMPLEMENT ENHANCEMENTS ~~THE PROGRAM.~~

(D) THE ~~COMMUNICATION PLATFORM~~ EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION AND ENHANCED COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING REQUIRED UNDER ~~SUBSECTION (B)(3) OF THIS SECTION~~ SHALL MAY INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

(1) A CELLULAR PHONE APPLICATION-BASED ~~PANIC BUTTON EVENT~~ EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM THAT:

(I) CAN BE INTEGRATED WITH A LOCAL PUBLIC SAFETY ANSWERING POINT; AND

(II) IS ABLE TO:

1. PLACE A STANDARD TELEPHONE CALL TO 9-1-1;

2. TEXT COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN AUTHORIZED USERS AND A PUBLIC SAFETY ANSWERING POINT AND PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCY;

3. PROVIDE TEXT MESSAGES, E-MAILS, AND PUSH NOTIFICATIONS TO AUTHORIZED USERS, INCLUDING

SCHOOL PERSONNEL, FIRST RESPONDERS, AND OTHER PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCY PERSONNEL; AND

4. AUTOMATICALLY TRANSMIT SCHOOL FLOOR PLANS, SCHOOL EMERGENCY PLANS, AND RELEVANT CONTACT INFORMATION TO FIRST RESPONDERS OR PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCY PERSONNEL RESPONDING TO A PANIC BUTTON EVENT AT A SCHOOL WITHOUT FURTHER ACTION NEEDED BY THE USER REPORTING THE EMERGENCY; AND

(2) CAPABILITY TO GENERATE AN AUTOMATED EMERGENCY ALERT NOTIFICATION TO ALL PUBLIC AND NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS LOCATED IN REASONABLE PROXIMITY TO AN EMERGENCY SITUATION THAT IS DETERMINED TO BE AN IMMINENT THREAT TO SCHOOL CAMPUSES OR SCHOOL PERSONNEL BY THE PUBLIC SAFETY ANSWERING POINT RECEIVING THE REPORT, INCLUDING REPORTS OF:

(I) AN INDIVIDUAL WHO WAS KILLED;

(II) AN ACCIDENT OR THREAT THAT RESULTED IN SERIOUS BODILY INJURY;

(III) AN INDIVIDUAL WHO WAS ASSAULTED WITH A DEADLY WEAPON AND THE ALLEGED ASSAILANT REMAINS AT LARGE;

(IV) THE DISCHARGE OF A FIREARM; AND

(V) ANY OTHER EMERGENCY SITUATION AGREED TO BY A PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCY AND A COUNTY BOARD.

(3) INTERCOMS, PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEMS, BI-DIRECTIONAL ANTENNAS OR BOOSTERS, AND OTHER TECHNOLOGY THAT WILL IMPROVE EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION AND COMMUNICATIONS AS IDENTIFIED BY THE CENTER.

~~**(E) THE COMMUNICATION PLATFORM PROCURED UNDER SUBSECTION (C) OF THIS SECTION SHALL BE CERTIFIED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY UNDER THE FEDERAL SUPPORT ANTI-TERRORISM BY FOSTERING EFFECTIVE TECHNOLOGIES ACT.**~~

~~**(F) (1) ON OR BEFORE SEPTEMBER 1, 2026, THE CENTER SHALL ENSURE THAT THE GRANT PROGRAM HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED IN EACH PUBLIC SCHOOL IN THE STATE IS OPERATING AND AVAILABLE TO A COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM COUNTY BOARD.**~~

~~(2) (I) A PUBLIC SCHOOL WITH AN EXISTING PROGRAM THAT IS SUBSTANTIALLY SIMILAR TO THE PROGRAM MAY SUBMIT A REQUEST TO THE CENTER TO OPT OUT OF THE PROGRAM.~~

~~(H) IF THE CENTER DETERMINES THAT A PUBLIC SCHOOL'S EXISTING PROGRAM IS SUBSTANTIALLY SIMILAR TO THE PROGRAM, THE CENTER SHALL GRANT THE SCHOOL'S REQUEST TO OPT OUT OF THE PROGRAM.~~

(G) FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026, THE GOVERNOR ~~SHALL~~ MAY INCLUDE IN THE ANNUAL BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION OF \$4,500,000 FOR THE PROGRAM.

Article – Public Safety

1–301.

(a) In this subtitle the following words have the meanings indicated.

(j) (1) “First responder” means an employee of a State or local public safety agency that provides emergency response services.

(2) “First responder” includes:

(i) a firefighter;

(ii) a paramedic;

(iii) an emergency medical technician;

(iv) a rescue squad member;

(v) a sworn member of the Office of the State Fire Marshal;

(vi) a member of a volunteer fire or rescue company who is a covered employee under § 9–234 of the Labor and Employment Article;

(vii) an individual who is licensed or certified under § 13–516 of the Education Article;
and

(viii) a 9–1–1 specialist.

(t) “Public safety agency” means:

(1) a functional division of a public agency that provides fire fighting, police, medical, or other emergency services; or

(2) a private entity that provides fire fighting, police, medical, or other emergency services on a voluntary basis.

(u) “Public safety answering point” means a communications facility that:

(1) is operated on a 24-hour basis;

(2) first receives 9-1-1 requests for emergency services in a 9-1-1 service area and;

(3) as appropriate:

(i) dispatches public safety services directly;

(ii) transmits incident data to appropriate public safety agencies within the State for the dispatch of public safety services; or

(iii) transfers 9-1-1 requests for emergency services or transmits

1. an appropriate federal emergency communication center responsible for the delivery of public safety services on a federal campus or federal reservation; or

2. an appropriate public safety answering point located within or outside the State.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 2024.