



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Public Schools - Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings - Requirements (SB432)**  
Senate Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee: February 7, 2024, 2:00pm

School shootings have become an all-too-familiar reality. Parents, teachers, school staff, and administrators want to prepare their children for a day they hope never arrives. This is a noble goal, but we must ensure that Maryland's students are not afflicted with long-lasting trauma.

In 2023, there were 340 school shootings-- almost one per day.<sup>1</sup> In 95% of schools in the U.S., active shooter drills are conducted to educate students, staff, and teachers on protocol.<sup>2</sup> While the effectiveness of such trainings needs more study, they are widely implemented. An average K-12 student will participate in 52 active shooter trainings. Many school districts assign students to role-play as shooters or victims and play recordings of gunfire or explosions. Not surprisingly, many children experience these drills as deeply traumatic.

SB432 would:

- Require the MD Center for School Safety (MCSS) to research the effects of active shooter drills;
- Update best practices for mandated active shooter drills;
- Give parents the annual schedule of drills (without exact dates) at the beginning of the school year;
- Make announcements in advance to students and staff;
- Identify students and staff who may need additional support;
- Prohibit schools from using live role-playing exercises or loud sounds imitating gunfire/explosions;
- Notify parents after a drill;
- Provide mental health follow-ups; and
- Initiate a collaboration between MCSS and the Maryland State Police for the creation of an instructional model regarding safe storage of firearms.

Anecdotal accounts from parents reveal that many students whose schools initiate an active shooter safety drill come out of the experience with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This is even worse in children with existing conditions such as PTSD, C-PTSD (Complex-PTSD), anxiety, or other mental health issues when they are placed into situations that may remind them of other distressing events in their lives. Research demonstrates that active shooter drills cause a 39% increase in depression; 42% increase in stress and anxiety; and a 23% uptick in physiological manifestations of trauma— in children as young as five years old.<sup>3</sup>

SB432 would alter existing law to better protect our State's children from mental and emotional harm.

This bill passed the House of Delegates unanimously last year.

**I urge a favorable report on SB432.**

<sup>1</sup> Modan, Naaz, and Kara Arundel. "Another Record High: Counting School Shootings in 2023." K-12 Dive, December 20, 2023.

<https://www.k12dive.com/news/2023-total-school-mass-shootings/703007/#:~:text=School%20shootings%20reached%20yet%20another.>

<sup>2</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety. "Reconsider Active Shooter Drills." Everytown, 2024. <https://www.everytown.org/solutions/active-shooter-drills/>.

<sup>3</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety. "The Impact of Active Shooter Drills in Schools." Everytown Research & Policy, September 3, 2020. <https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-impact-of-active-shooter-drills-in-schools/>.