



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL**  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

DAWN LUEDTKE  
COUNCILMEMBER  
DISTRICT 7

February 27, 2024

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

RE: Senate Bill 756, *Primary and Secondary Education - School Safety and Student Well-Being - Examination of Policies and Funding*

Dear Chair Feldman:

The language proposed in Senate Bill 756 expands upon the existing Safe to Learn Act of 2018 (STLA), and strengthens and enhances processes and procedures between and among state agencies for the safety and benefit of Maryland's K-12 public school students. During the 2018 legislative session, I spent considerable time working on the creation of the STLA on behalf of my former client, the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS). It was a broad-sweeping piece of legislation that melded bills offered by the Hogan Administration and members of the General Assembly into comprehensive school safety laws in the aftermath of the tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida on February 14, 2018 and our own local tragedy claiming the life of Jaelyn Rose Willey on March 20, 2018 at Great Mills High School in St. Mary's County. Our local school systems, local law enforcement and State agencies have had nearly six years under the STLA, and that has given us all time to appreciate the need for refinement and expansion in the best interest of our students, staff and families.

I appreciate Senate Bill 756's language requiring the explicit collaboration of the Maryland State Department of Education, Interagency Commission on School Construction, and Maryland Center for School Safety on creation of physical security guidelines to safeguard our public school's K-12 facilities. The language used here clearly delineates the frequency with which the reviews and compliance checks must be done.

Senate Bill 756 also expands the categories of spending for school safety measures for which local school systems could seek grant funding under the Safe Schools Fund grant, and increases

the amount of funding required to \$20,000,000 annually beginning with FY2026. Although the existing language of Md. Code Educ. Art. §7-1512(f) frames the uses of the fund as applicable to strengthening school safety generally and uses the word "including" signifying examples of categories rather than an exhaustive list of all potential school safety enhancement uses, there are specific categories that Senate Bill 756 proposes to add which signal an emphasis and prioritization for funding. This statutory cue should assist local school systems, working in conjunction with their local law enforcement partners and the Maryland Center for School Safety in prioritizing funding requests to better ensure affirmative and actionable conflict resolution and mediation between and among students, and making sure that School Resource Officer or adequate law enforcement coverage is truly meeting the needs of the local school system.

A few additional clarifications are required in order to achieve the goals set forth in Senate Bill 756 and deliver the desired enhancements to the STLA. With that in mind, I respectfully request the following amendments:

- Existing documents and guidelines called for under the STLA are shielded from the public under Maryland's Public Information Act under Md. Code, Gen. Prov. Art. §4-314.1. The requested guidelines on physical school security called for by Senate Bill 756's proposed Md. Code Educ. Art. §7-1510(h) must be added to the list of items shielded under that provision as well.
- An affirmative provision requiring MCSS to evaluate and provide written feedback on whether a local school system's plans for SRO or adequate law enforcement coverage that are currently required by Md. Code Educ. Art. §7-1508(e) to be submitted by local school systems to the Center are sufficient based on the MCSS guidelines provided for in Md. Code Educ. Art. §7-1508(d).

I want to thank Senator Hester for her work on this legislation, and for her care and attention to school safety matters.

Very truly yours,



Dawn Luedtke  
Councilmember, District 7  
Montgomery County

cc: Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee Committee