

# **ZeroEyes Testimony SB 756 Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ellen Valentino

Position: FAV



DATE: February 28, 2024  
TO: Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
FROM: ZeroEyes  
SUBJECT: Support Senate Bill 756, Primary and Secondary Education – School Safety and Well-Being – Examination of Policies and Funding

Thank you, Chair Feldman, and committee members, for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 756. I'd like to also thank the sponsor, Senator Hester. On behalf of the ZeroEyes team, thank you for spearheading this issue.

My name is Mia Link, and I am the Vice President of Strategy for ZeroEyes. ZeroEyes was founded in 2018 by military veterans with the mission of improving public safety by providing proactive firearm detection in schools, commercial buildings, and government infrastructure.

Five years ago, ZeroEyes was spurred into action following the events at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida, when a former student brought a gun into the school, killing 17 and wounding an additional 17 people. Our team has grown out of the military special operations community and is now close to 200 employees, 80% of whom are military and law enforcement veterans.

Our technology uses artificial intelligence software implemented on already existing security camera infrastructure to detect visible firearms and alert law enforcement within seconds. Again, these are existing cameras that are then integrated with AI technology. Our software does not perform any sort of facial recognition, behavioral characterization, or predictive analytics and is compliant with all privacy standards and frameworks.

In the last five years, we have experienced rapid growth. Our software is deployed into hundreds of K-12 districts across 35 states. Our service is also used and implemented within large enterprise organizations such as the Department of Defense, the Veterans Administration, Meijer, Verizon, FedEx, DHL, Subaru, and Home Depot among many others.

The lack of budget is the single greatest obstacle for schools to implement this technology. With this bill, Maryland would join other states that are prioritizing school safety by taking the initiative to fund and add a proactive, technological solution to the growing problem of gun violence in schools. We believe that this is the future direction – not just for school safety, but also for other areas such as hospitals, shopping centers, and so much more.

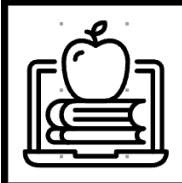
We look forward to the opportunity to partner with the State of Maryland and the Office of School Safety on this pilot should this legislation be enacted. We would also like to offer a demonstration of our technology, should your committee be interested.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this issue and I'm happy to take any questions at this time.

# **SB 756 - Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Henry J. Meiser

Position: FAV



# Coalition for Safer Schools

TO: Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment

RE: Senate Bill 756, Primary and Secondary Education -- School Safety and Student Wellbeing – Examination of Policies and Funding

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Chair Feldman, Vice-Chairwoman Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Coalition for Safer Schools, I write in support of Senate Bill 756 (SB 756), Primary and Secondary Education – School Safety and Student Wellbeing – Examination of Policies and Funding. The bill makes common sense and needs updates to our State’s Safe to Learn Act<sup>1</sup>, originally passed in 2018.

The Safe to Learn Act provides a strong framework for Maryland to keep our school communities safe, however, as the needs of our schools continue to adapt and change, so must our policies. SB 756 makes policy and funding-related changes to the Safe to Learn Act to ensure our schools are operating in as safe a manner as possible, and that the funding we are allocating is going to the right places, where schools truly need it.

Currently, under §7-1508(e) and §7-1508(g), \$10 million is being allocated *specifically and only* for the purpose of helping local school systems and law enforcement agencies meet the requirements for school resources officers (SROs) and adequate school security<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, a local school system can pursue non-competitive grant funding for more school safety related issues (beyond just SROs), like conducting school safety evaluations, training assessments, behavioral health, and parent/student trainings<sup>3</sup>.

The issue having these funds separated creates, is that a school systems who does not need financial support provided currently in the SRO grant, is losing access to that funding. However, by re-assigning the funds allocated in §7-1508, it will open the door to more funding for *all* local school systems. It also allows each local school

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<sup>1</sup> Senate Bill 1265 (2018 Regular Session), “*Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018*”, Maryland General Assembly

<sup>2</sup> Md. Code Ann., Education §7-1508(e)-(g), “*School Safety Coordinator, school resource officers, and school safety employees*”

<sup>3</sup> Md. Code Ann., Education §7-1512, “*Safe Schools Fund*”

system to make decisions to use funding based off of what they need most – if a school system needs to use the grant money for SROs, SB 756 allows that. Similarly, if a local school system wants to use the grant money for one of the many other items outlined in §7-1512, they can also do that. Summarily, **SB 756 allows school systems, who know their districts best, to use direct grant money where it will help the most.**

The bill also requires that the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS), Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) review the state of physical security in schools, and the existing guidelines on school safety. To my knowledge, there has been no such multi-agency review of the condition of physical security of all school statewide which has been conducted in recent years. The physical security of our schools is the first barrier between the safety and wellbeing of students and staff and external threats, and appropriate review is crucial to maintaining this barrier.

Finally, the bill requires an evaluation of the execution of MCSS' functions and duties. Ensuring that we as a State are doing everything, we possibly can to support our local school systems, and schools themselves. Such an evaluation will ensure that our state's center for school safety is on par with this expectation.

Overall, SB 756 is common sense legislation which makes necessary changes to the Safe to Learn Act. These changes remove unnecessary limits on available funding, prioritize our local school systems, and ensure our State is making the safety and security of our school community and its stakeholder. For these reasons, the Coalition urges this committee produce a favorable report.

Respectfully,



**Henry J. Meiser**

Executive Director

Coalition for Safer Schools

[henry@schoolsafetycoalition.net](mailto:henry@schoolsafetycoalition.net)





# **SB756 MCSS 2024.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kate Bryan

Position: FAV

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<b>Bill:</b>	Senate Bill 756	<b>Date:</b>	February 28, 2024
<b>Title:</b>	Primary and Secondary Education - School Safety and Student Well-Being - Examination of Policies and Funding	<b>Committee:</b>	Education, Energy & Environment
<b>Position:</b>	Favorable	<b>Contact:</b>	Kim Buckheit <a href="mailto:kim.buckheit1@maryland.gov">kim.buckheit1@maryland.gov</a> 443-902-0622

On behalf of the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS), thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter of support for Senate Bill 756.

MCSS remains committed to assisting Local Education Agencies (LEA) in implementing a layered approach to school safety and fully supports county governments and school systems in making informed decisions about school safety strategies that meet the unique needs of their school communities.

The School Resource Officer (SRO) Grant program is a non-competitive grant program designed for LEAs and law enforcement agencies to meet statutory requirements of locals to provide each public school in Maryland with an SRO or adequate law enforcement coverage. It is important to note that **Senate Bill 756 does not remove the statutory requirements to assign SROs or provide adequate law enforcement coverage to every public school in Maryland.** However, the bill would increase flexibility for locals to use grant funding to invest in a variety of school safety and security strategies as part of a multi-pronged approach to school safety and security.

The Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018 (Senate Bill 1265, Chapter 30) ushered in a comprehensive approach to school safety and security in Maryland's Public Schools. As part of that approach, the Act established the Safe Schools Fund, authorizing grants for various school safety initiatives and programs. Included in the Safe Schools Fund is a mandatory appropriation of \$10 million annually for each public school to meet the requirement of an assigned SRO or adequate law enforcement coverage for each public school. Separately, the Safe Schools Fund is funded with \$600,000 per year, allocated at \$25,000 per school system.



Although some local governments rely heavily on the SRO Grant to support their SRO programs, the grant has not been fully utilized by all jurisdictions. Some jurisdictions fully or partially fund their local SRO programs and as such, their portion of the grant allocation at the end of the fiscal year goes unused. However, those school systems continue to have funding gaps to support their prevention, response, and recovery efforts.

The expanded grant categories identified in Senate Bill 756 would continue to allow LEAs access to funds to support their local SRO programs but also allow LEAs not currently applying for the grant access to the funds to address other identified gaps and vulnerabilities, reinforcing a continuous cycle of preparedness through assessment, identification, and correction.

School-based and system-level personnel must work collaboratively with their local first responders to prepare for the various emergency situations that can occur at a school. School-based emergency preparedness is complicated with many different stakeholders and events that must be planned for including severe weather, medical emergencies, transportation events, behavior escalations, large-scale special events like graduation and games, and unexpected danger inside or outside of the school building. Senate Bill 756 allows all LEAs access to grant funds to support existing school safety initiatives including SRO programs. The additional categories provided in Senate Bill 756 will assist locals in meeting the critical components of all-hazard readiness.

Thank you again for taking the time to review this information and we ask the Committee for a favorable report.

**e. AB School Safety Recommendations 2022.pdf**

Uploaded by: Katie Fry Hester

Position: FAV

## School Safety Advisory Board 2021-2022 Recommendations

The Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018, Md. Code Ann., Educ. §§ 7-1501-1512, established the School Safety Subcabinet and Advisory Board while significantly altering and expanding the role of the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS). The Subcabinet serves as a regulatory authority and as the governing board of MCSS and the Advisory Board provides advice and assists the Subcabinet in completing its duties.

Prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year, the School Safety Subcabinet asked the Advisory Board to identify gaps and opportunities in school safety and to develop recommendations on how best to address the identified gaps.

The Advisory Board sees a need for the state to continue to focus on broad approaches to school safety beyond physical safety with consideration given to balancing the minimum safety and security elements necessary to ensure student and school safety without efforts that allow Maryland's diverse schools to better identify and address the needs and concerns of our students. In the process, creating inclusive educational environments free from fear, harm, trauma, and unnecessary hardship.

The Advisory Board identified several areas where school safety efforts should be expanded or explored.



# Evaluation and Data Collection

## Observation 1

It is unclear if legislation, policies, actions, and efforts are making improvements in school safety.

With the enactment of the Safe to Learn Act 2018, many efforts have been made at the state and local levels. However, it is unclear whether the legislative requirements including training, funding, and emergency management efforts have improved the safety of students or schools.

### Recommendation 1.1

The State should identify and secure funding to conduct broad and targeted research and evaluation of efforts to determine the impact of legislation, policies, and other efforts on improving the safety of students and schools.

## Observation 2

The collection of school safety and other data collected and reported to and by the State (e.g., arrest data, bullying, use of force) needs consistency across school systems to limit inaccuracies and consolidate data collection and reporting requirements on local schools and school systems.

### Recommendation 2.1

Conduct an assessment of data collected and collection procedures to determine how best to consolidate and report information that better informs school safety initiatives and actions.

### Recommendation 2.2

Convene a diverse workgroup to review and modify, as appropriate, the existing arrest data reporting requirements to ensure school-based arrest data collection is distinguishable from community based arrests including those defined as “reportable offenses.”



# Resources and Training

## Observation 3

There is a need for more support to identify behaviors of concern, de-escalate situations, and provide resources to re-engage, and strengthen school, community, students, parents, and staff relationships thereby creating a culture of civility.

### Recommendation 3.1

Develop or expand informational practices and training to educate stakeholders including students, staff, parents, and communities on identifying behaviors of concern. These resources should incorporate the student voice.

### Recommendation 3.2

Continue efforts that communicate the impact of trauma and the need for trauma informed care.

### Recommendation 3.3

Conduct an assessment of health curriculum (i.e., substance abuse, suicidal ideation) across the state and ensure consistency of curriculum statewide.

### Recommendation 3.4

Conduct an assessment of relationship violence curriculum.

### Recommendation 3.5

Expand the use and awareness of Safe Schools Maryland (SSMD) throughout all Maryland schools.

## Observation 4

A gap exists between safe school buildings and safe communities. There is limited capacity to provide students with a continuum of community-based interventions and after-school programs that support positive behavior. Many students live in communities where they are experiencing or witnessing serious violence.

### Recommendation 4.1

Explore creative solutions to expand the availability of safe after school activities, which include transportation.

## Recommendation 4.2

Expand the availability of transportation for after-school programs.

## Recommendation 4.3

Explore after-school mentoring programs that remain in place all the way through a student's school career. This would help increase engagement and make schools feel like complete campus communities.

## Observation 5

Build mechanisms to fill gaps in human resources including educators, crisis intervention supports, security, mental health, social workers, facility and support staff, bus drivers, public safety, etc.

## Recommendation 5.1

Develop multiple strategies for filling gaps in school and school support staffing at the State and local levels.

## Recommendation 5.2

Provide data on current mental/behavioral health staffing levels by school type (i.e., elementary, middle, high) compared with student enrollment numbers and "ideal" ratios identified by national association of school psychologists.

## Observation 6

There are unrealistic expectations regarding what law enforcement and educators can do in response to social media threats or posts.

## Recommendation 6.1

Develop guidance on the criminal and administrative investigation and response to social media threats made against schools. This should include the development of a public infographic to explain the process from the identification of the threat through investigation and resolution.

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# Emergency Preparedness

## Observation 7

Schools (public, private, non-public) must implement comprehensive school safety preparedness programs that includes assessment, equipping, planning, training, testing (i.e., exercising and drilling), evaluating, and the tracking of improvements.

### Recommendation 7.1

Identify existing federal and state funding available for schools which support comprehensive preparedness efforts for all schools, including private and non-public.

### Recommendation 7.2

Request additional state funding to support comprehensive preparedness efforts for all schools, including private and non-public.

### Recommendation 7.3

Expand preparedness guidance and resources to support comprehensive school emergency preparedness efforts. This may include the development of new guidance documents, exercise templates, video training, and other resources to support school emergency preparedness efforts statewide.

## Observation 8

Since the onset of the pandemic there is a need to better ensure cyber security of students, schools, and school systems from cyber incidents.

### Recommendation 8.1

The State should provide cyber security recommendations, training, and resources to assist schools and school systems in conducting cyber assessments and cyber response plans.

### Recommendation 8.2

Provide training and resources for students and guardians on cybersecurity safety at home.

### Recommendation 8.3

Improve or expand digital citizenship education and awareness for Pk-12 students to help them better understand their “digital footprint” and help them make good decisions when using online media.

### Observation 9

Need to address and correct inaccurate information which has the potential to inflame tensions.

### Recommendation 9.1

Develop education and guidance on how to quickly identify and address inaccurate information while balancing response efforts, which do not dilute effective communication strategies.

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## Building and Facility

### Observation 10

Although there is a need for more focus on approaches to school safety beyond physical safety and greater consideration of the possible negative effects of physical safety measures, including security technology and personnel, there is a continued need for funding for physical security upgrades, replacements, and additions for schools facilities and buses. These may include cameras, fencing, access control systems, vestibules, etc.

### Recommendation 10.1

IAC, MSDE, and MCSS should review existing facility security guidance and develop recommendations for minimum physical security, including design and technology, that have the least negative effects on students.

### Recommendation 10.2

Continue to provide public and private schools with access to funding to address physical security and equipment upgrades.



### Recommendation 10.3

Develop recommendations to address non-physical security approaches to improve the safety of our schools.

### Observation 11

The SRO grant does not allow agencies to hire, funding can not be used for other purposes, and the allocation formula in statute provides only \$7K per public school.

### Recommendation 11.1

Bring together local law enforcement agencies and school systems to review the existing STLA grant language and discuss potential amendments to the statute, development of grant regulation, or grant administrative changes.

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# **Safe to Learn Testimony.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Katie Fry Hester

Position: FAV

**KATIE FRY HESTER**  
*Legislative District 9*  
Howard and Montgomery Counties

Education, Energy, and  
Environment Committee

Chair, Joint Committee on  
Cybersecurity, Information Technology  
and Biotechnology



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**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of SB 756 - Primary and Secondary Education - School Safety and Student Well-Being - Examination of Policies and Funding**

February 28th, 2024

Chairman Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Energy, Education, and Environment Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 756, which seeks to holistically improve school safety and student well-being by increasing flexibility and funding in the Safe Schools Fund, adding student-centered services, and mandating guidelines on physical security in schools.

For context, over the summer, my office worked with the Center for School Safety to survey our local school systems to see how we could further school safety. We had the support of Henry Meiser, a recent high school graduate from St. Mary's County, who will share some of the research findings with you. However, the bottom line is that our local schools are struggling with inadequate funding for school safety measures and limited flexibility in fund allocation. Notably, salaries for law enforcement officers have gone up over 30% since we passed the original Safe to Learn Act in 2018, thereby requiring increased funding to meet the fiscal demand for salaries.

Therefore, Senate Bill 756 will significantly improve school safety and student well-being by increasing the flexibility and annual funding provided by the Safe to Learn Act of 2018.

Specifically, this bill will:

- Increase from \$10.6M to \$20.6M the annual allocation in the Safe Schools Fund
- Expand the flexibility of the fund so that it can be used for a wider array of services, including:
  - Hiring School Resource Officers and/or providing sufficient law enforcement coverage for schools
  - Training and resources for de-escalation and mediation services
  - Wrap-around services for behavioral health
  - Conducting emergency preparedness activities and outreach to the broader community

In addition, Senate Bill 756 requires a more formal review and analysis of security practices being applied at the local level. This includes:

- Directing the Interagency Commission (IAC), the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and the Center for School Safety (CSS) to assess current facility security guidance, and to develop recommendations in alignment with the goals of the School Safety Advisory Board's recommendation.
- Requiring MSDE, CSS, and Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center (MLDSC) to conduct a longitudinal report to assess the impact of school safety policy measures on the rates of bullying, discipline, arrests, suicide interventions, threat assessments, overdoses, and weapons on campus.
- Completing a capacity assessment for the Center for School Safety (CSS) to ensure it has appropriate staff to meet the Center's codified functions and duties.

Increasing funding through Senate Bill 756 is pivotal for the implementation of crucial safety measures. Comprehensive assessments of school safety protocols ensure educational institutions can adapt to evolving challenges. By investing in our students' safety, we not only protect their physical well-being but also foster an environment where they can thrive academically and emotionally.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 756.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katie Fry Hester".

Senator Katie Fry Hester  
Howard and Montgomery Counties

# **SB 756 - Primary and Secondary Education - School**

Uploaded by: Mary Pat Fannon

Position: FAV



**PSSAM**  
Public School Superintendents' Association  
OF MARYLAND

**Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director**  
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Baltimore, MD 21224  
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**BILL:** SB 756

**TITLE:** Primary and Secondary Education - School Safety and Student Well-Being - Examination of Policies and Funding

**DATE:** February 28, 2024

**POSITION:** Favorable

**COMMITTEE:** Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

**CONTACT:** Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

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The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **supports** Senate Bill 756.

This bill (1) repeals mandated funding specifically to help local governments provide School Resource Officers (SROs) and adequate law enforcement coverage for public schools; (2) expands the authorized uses of the Safe Schools Fund; and (3) requires the Governor to include an annual appropriation of \$20.0 million to the fund beginning in fiscal 2026. By July 1, 2025, and every two years thereafter, specified entities must review the state of physical security in schools and promulgate guidelines for school security. By December 1, 2025, the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) must contract with a third party to ensure that the center is adequately performing its statutory functions; the Governor must include \$200,000 in fiscal 2026 for this assessment. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in consultation with specified entities, must provide an analysis of the effect of State and local policies on school safety and student well-being.

In 2018, the General Assembly passed the Safe to Learn Act and created a comprehensive initiative for the improvement of school safety, including the creation of the Safe Schools Fund to be administered by the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS). While local districts are in need of additional funding for school safety, the existing prohibition on using this Fund for school security employees has resulted in lower usage of the Fund. However, the increased authorized uses under this legislation will greatly enhance the demand and usage of the Fund.

For these reasons, PSSAM **supports** Senate Bill 756 and requests a **favorable** report.

# **SB756 Primary and Secondary Education - School Saf**

Uploaded by: Dawana Sterrette

Position: FWA

**Testimony of the  
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners  
In Support with Amendments  
Senate Bill 756 –  
Primary and Secondary Education  
School Safety and Student Well-Being – Examination of  
Policies and Funding**

**February 28, 2024**

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports Senate Bill 756 which seeks to increase the annual appropriation to the Safe Schools fund. Additional provisions of the proposal include an expansion of activities that qualify for grants. These are much-needed funds for the Baltimore City Public School System. The cost to implement a weapons detection system throughout our high schools is estimated to be \$6 million. The estimated cost for interior locks and the replacement of interior doors, is \$27.8 million.

School security is a major priority for the district, and we have achieved significant progress in several key areas:

- Development of a comprehensive school safety program, including ongoing analysis of school-based incidents that impact our students and school communities, resulting in the development of formal revisions and updates to make entry procedures more secure and standardized across the district.
- As an enhancement to our current school security system utilizing traditional metal detectors, the district recently completed a successful pilot using more modern weapons detection systems in our high schools. In addition to more accurate detection, the systems we piloted streamline student entry by allowing high volumes of students to pass through the system at one time.
- The district already utilizes extensive security equipment, including CCTV and an automated visitor entry system. In mid-January, the CEO of the school system briefed the Board on the district's development of a comprehensive roadmap (City Schools Safety Program) to enhance safety standards and services across City Schools. This program is aligned with the current needs of our students and staff, while also leveraging guidance and resources from federal, state and local resources (i.e., Maryland Center for School Safety, Maryland State Department of Education, U.S. Department of Education).



As an amendment to the legislation there should be no sunset on the \$10 million required to work on plans that the school system must submit and to ensure all funding is to supplement and not supplant.

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For the foregoing reasons, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports with amendment Senate Bill 756 and urges a favorable report.

Dawana Merritt Sterrette, Esq.  
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**SB 756 SUPPORT (February 2024).pdf**

Uploaded by: Dawn Luedtke

Position: FWA



**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

# **SB 756.School Safety SRO Funding to Student Well B**

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: FWA

**BILL:** Senate Bill 756  
**TITLE:** Primary and Secondary Education - School Safety and Student Well-Being - Examination of Policies and Funding  
**DATE:** February 28, 2024  
**POSITION:** SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS  
**COMMITTEE:** Education, Energy, and the Environment; Budget and Taxation  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports Senate Bill 756 regarding the increased commitment of the State in supporting local school system efforts to ensure school safety and student well-being. While MABE opposes repealing the provision of State funding dedicated to funding the essential services of school resource officers (SROs), MABE believes the bill’s proposal to increase funding and provide additional flexibility for local school systems is an approach worthy of pursuit.

MABE has consistently been a leading advocate for the State’s balanced approach to a statewide system of high-quality school security services, including SROs, civilian school security staff, school-based and behavioral health staff, and the role of the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS). MABE is also a strong supporter of the State’s approach, adopted in statute and regulations, to promote the equitable administration of student disciplinary actions, and the use of progressive, non-exclusionary student discipline and restorative practices to resolve student behavioral issues.

Unfortunately, even though well-established in state law, regulations, and policies, key programs such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), restorative practices, and diversionary programs are not receiving remotely enough state and local funding. Again, MABE believes the expanded scope of funding and flexibility proposed in Senate Bill 765 is a strong basis for making progress on behalf of public school students, staff, and families relying on us to do better.

MABE’s adopted legislative positions and policy statement on school safety and security issues strike a balance of advocating for funding and policy decisions at the state level and support for local school system efforts to develop and implement school safety programs and strategies based on local priorities and available resources.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all local boards of education in Maryland:

- ✓ **Supports** federal, State, and local government funding for local public school safety programs, facility upgrades, and the wide array of behavioral health and public safety services provided by other public and private entities, which are essential to maintaining safe and secure schools.
- ✓ **Supports** increased state funding to support the work of local school systems to ensure that state laws and regulations, including the Safe to Learn Act, are implemented with fidelity; and increased state and local funding for programs addressing gangs, drugs, human trafficking, behavioral health, and the impact of systemic violence in communities, schools, and our students’ lives.
- ✓ **Supports** local discretion to adopt programs and policies to ensure school safety and security.
- ✗ **Opposes** legislation which attempts to address student safety concerns by prescribing specific tools or approaches or imposes unfunded mandates on local boards of education.

Safety and security in public schools is extremely important to local boards of education for the protection of students and staff, as well as necessary to environments conducive to teaching and learning. MABE believes that safety in public schools is the joint responsibility of local boards of education, school administrators and staff, students, parents and guardians, law enforcement and other public safety agencies, human services agencies, and the community in general.

Following the tragic school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012, the State Board approved reforms to require evacuation, shelter in place, lockdown and other drills that all schools must conduct each year. In 2013, with MABE's support, the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) was created to facilitate coordination and collaboration between local school systems. Tragically, a mass school shooting occurred on Feb. 14, 2018 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida; and a school shooting occurred on March 20, 2018 at Great Mills High School in St. Mary's County, Maryland. These events led to broad bipartisan support for the Safe to Learn Act of 2018, which:

- Established a School Safety Subcabinet and Advisory Board and increases funding for MCSS.
- Required school systems to designate a certified school safety coordinator and to conduct annual safety evaluations of each school;
- Required local school systems to designate a mental health services coordinator, and requires local assessment teams to intervene with students and individuals who may pose a threat to school safety;
- Required all school resource officers (SROs) and school safety and security personnel to complete a specialized curriculum in school law and restorative approaches, and requires school systems to report on schools with assigned SROs and, if not, how adequate local law enforcement will be provided; and
- Provided significant funding for school facility upgrades and school safety and security programs.

The Center for School Safety has revised and expanded the mandated training for all school security staff and SROs, and the legislature consistently invests in school safety programs and facility upgrades. In 2021, the legislature considered but did not enact bills to reform or eliminate SRO programs. However, police reform laws were enacted regarding the police officers' bill of rights, police misconduct, use of force and arrest procedures, use of body-worn cameras, and training, and impact all law enforcement officers including SROs.

In addition, Maryland law mandates local board policies on criminal gang activity, background checks and employer history reviews for employees and contractors, and emergency plans and drills to prepare for violent events and natural disasters. State law also defines educators as "persons in position of authority" and criminalizes as a fourth-degree sex offense sexual activity between educators and students above the age of consent.

MABE urges the legislature to continue to invest in the high-quality school safety programs described above and consider the input of local boards in the development of the more holistic approach to school safety and student behavior proposed in this legislation and other bills intended to ensure safe learning environments in all schools and for all students and staff.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 756 with amendments to sustain mandated funding for SROs as well as other school security staff, and the expanded types of services and evaluations proposed in the bill.



# **SB 756 - Favorable w\_ Amendments .pdf**

Uploaded by: Kenzie Funk

Position: FWA



**Testimony in SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS of  
Senate Bill 756: Primary and Secondary Education – School Safety and Student Well Being –  
Examination of Policies and Funding**

**Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

**Position: Favorable with Amendments**

February 28, 2024

Strong Schools Maryland envisions a Maryland with a World class education system, defined and codified through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The Blueprint contains Pillar Five, Governance and Accountability, which recognizes the importance of holding governing infrastructures accountable for their impact on student populations. Furthermore, the Blueprint prioritizes student population health and wellbeing, moving away from harmful, punitive policy in approaching school safety. Transparency proceeds accountability; in order to be held accountable, an organization must be honest in their analysis of their safety practices.

Senate Bill 756 upholds a dedication to transparency when analyzing school safety through the Maryland Center for School Safety, the State Department of Education, and Interagency Commission on School Construction as these organizations directly impact the physical safety of Maryland's student population. The proposed legislation dictates that these agencies work together to perform joint reviews every two years to analyze school safety. As a result, they will be mandated to give the local school systems guidelines designed to improve school safety. Strong Schools Maryland supports bills that increase our dedication to transparency in all aspects of the school system.

While Strong Schools Maryland endorses this bill's dedication to transparency, accountability, and improvement of school safety, we propose amending the fiscal aspect of the bill that would require an additional allocation of \$20,000,000 in the annual budget to fund these efforts before collecting the results of this analysis. Strong Schools Maryland urges the General Assembly to consider how this preemptive analysis can inform us how to better invest in restorative practices instead of investing this additional money into "school safety". According to the Center for American Progress, policy makers must invest in evidence based solutions instead of reactionary spending that only makes the public *feel* better.<sup>1</sup>

Too often, these resources are utilized to implement greater police presence, armed staff, and more stringent security measures. As a result, we are cautious to allocate greater funding before the Center, the Department, and the Interagency Commission conduct these school reviews defined by the proposed legislation and collect recommendations of how to improve safety in an efficacious manner.

**For these reasons, we urge a favorable report contingent on removing the funding portion of Senate Bill 756.**

For more information, contact Kenzie Funk at [kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org](mailto:kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org)

<sup>1</sup> [Smart Investments for Safer Schools](#)

# **SB756 Written Statement 2024 Session\_Current Lette**

Uploaded by: Laura Vykol-Gray

Position: INFO



**Maryland**

DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET  
AND MANAGEMENT

WES MOORE  
*Governor*

HELENE GRADY  
*Secretary*

ARUNA MILLER  
*Lieutenant Governor*

MARC L. NICOLE  
*Deputy Secretary*

## **SENATE BILL 756      Primary and Secondary Education - School Safety and Student Well-Being - Examination of Policies and Funding**

### **STATEMENT OF INFORMATION**

**DATE: February 28, 2024**

**COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment**

**SUMMARY OF BILL:** Senate Bill 756 ends the existing \$10 million annual general fund mandate to provide grants to local school systems or law enforcement agencies to assist in providing adequate law enforcement coverage for public schools after FY 2025, replacing it with a \$20 million annual mandated appropriation to the Safe Schools Fund in fiscal 2026 and each year thereafter. The bill also (1) requires the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS), Maryland State Department of Education, and the Interagency Commission on School Construction to jointly review the state of physical security in schools and the existing guidelines on school safety every two years starting July 1, 2025, (2) requires the agencies to promulgate guidelines for school security, and (3) expands the authorized uses of the Safe Schools Fund.

**EXPLANATION:** Senate Bill 756 increases State general fund mandated costs by \$10 million in fiscal 2026 and every year thereafter. The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) is charged with submitting a balanced budget to the General Assembly annually and will be working with the General Assembly to achieve structural balance over the long-term. In light of current projected general fund deficits in fiscal 2026 forward, the Department urges caution in passing legislation significantly increasing expenditures. State government must be intentional, disciplined, and strategic with its allocation of State funding to ensure maximum impact toward priority outcomes. It would be challenging for the State to manage a significant increase in spending given the forecasted out-year deficits for the General Fund. However, DBM notes that the provisions in Senate Bill 756 moving funding from solely supporting law enforcement coverage to supporting the purposes of the Safe Schools Fund in general are beneficial given that MCSS has insufficient demand for the program as it exists currently in statute. The annual appropriation has been \$10 million since fiscal 2020, yet annual grant expenditures have remained at or below \$5.2 million. The changes in the legislation are likely to encourage local school systems to use a greater portion of the funds than they have in the past.

**For additional information, contact Laura Vykol-Gray at  
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