



Maryland

DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET
AND MANAGEMENT

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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.

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