



Maryland Youth Advisory Council  
c/o Governor's Office of Crime  
Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services  
100 Community Place,  
Crownsville, MD 21032

Grace Minakowski, *Chair*  
Will O'Donnell, *Vice-Chair*  
Folashade Epebinu, *Secretary*

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February 7, 2024

**Re: HB 416** | Public Schools – Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings – Requirements

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council prides itself on being a coalition of diverse young advocates and leaders who serve as a voice for youth in the state of Maryland. As leaders in our communities, and as appointees of the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Maryland Association of Student Councils, Maryland Higher Education Commission and the University System of Maryland, we take every opportunity to address relevant issues by influencing legislation, spreading public awareness and serving as a liaison between youth and policymakers regarding issues facing youth.

The evidence for why school systems should take action regarding active shooter safety drills and training lies in the unpredictable and quickly evolving nature of active shooter incidents. Active shooter preparedness resources emphasize the importance of developing emergency plans and the actions that may be taken during an incident.<sup>1</sup> Due to the unpredictable nature of active shooter incidents, it is important for school systems to carefully consider the implementation of active shooter safety drills and training, ensuring that measures are conducted in a way that safeguards students and staff.<sup>2</sup>

Maryland is a podium state when it comes to addressing detrimental issues concerning school safety. In the 2022-2023 school year, fourteen local school systems submitted a school safety evaluation summary to the Maryland Center for School Safety. The summaries highlighted, in addition to requests made by Local Education Agencies (LEAs) for emergency drill assistance,<sup>3</sup> demonstrate the immediate need for additional staff training on emergency plans, and security policies.

By developing model content and requiring schools to adhere to set standards, Maryland can ensure a consistent approach to active shooter training across all schools, enhancing overall effectiveness. Providing notices to parents, students, and school personnel as required by HB 416, fosters a greater sense of community involvement and engagement in school safety efforts.

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<sup>1</sup>“Active Shooter Preparedness.” n.d. [www.cisa.gov](http://www.cisa.gov). Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. Accessed February 5, 2024. <https://www.cisa.gov/topics/physical-security/active-shooter-preparedness>.

<sup>2</sup> “*The Impact of Active Shooter Drills in Schools.*” 2020. *Everytown Research & Policy. Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund. September 3, 2020.* <https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-impact-of-active-shooter-drills-in-schools/>.

<sup>3</sup> “2023 ANNUAL REPORT.” 2023. Maryland Center for School Safety. <https://schoolsafety.maryland.gov/Pages/default.aspx>.

**HB 416** mandates the study of active shooter safety drills' effectiveness and psychological impact, requiring the identification of best practices and incorporation into the annual schedule of drills for local school systems. It also necessitates actions by local school systems, such as data collection, reporting, and providing notice to parents, students, and school personnel. The Council has voted in favor of **HB 416** as it aligns with the Council's Legislative Platform supporting:

- a) Proactive measures to ensure student and school personnel safety and to prevent school violence and vandalism. (Article V. School Safety and Student Discipline; Clause A)

For the sake of Maryland students and school staff, the Maryland General Assembly should aim to enhance school safety emergency practices through research and incorporating proven strategies into the annual schedule of drills for local school systems. For these reasons, the Council supports **HB 416** and respectfully requests a favorable report from the committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Minakowski', written in a cursive style.

Grace Minakowski, Chair  
Maryland Youth Advisory Council