

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2000 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 806 (Allegany County Delegation)

Ways and Means

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**Allegany County School System - Student Transportation - Time and Distance Restriction**

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This bill eliminates, for students in grades nine through 12, the time and distance requirement which prohibits students in Allegany County from being transported on school buses to and from school for distances exceeding 45 miles or for a period longer than one hour, whichever takes a shorter period of time.

This bill takes effect July 1, 2000.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** None.

**Local Effect:** Repealing the time and distance requirement would not directly affect local school expenditures; however, it would provide additional flexibility to the Allegany County Board of Education in setting student transportation routes or altering secondary school attendance boundaries.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** In Allegany County, students cannot be transported on school buses to and from school for distances exceeding 45 miles or for a period longer than one hour, whichever takes a shorter period of time. Exceptions are provided if the student participates in a career and technology program, a special education program, or a blind and deaf program. This restriction only applies to Allegany County with other local school systems in the State

transporting students for longer distances and periods of time.

**Background:** The Allegany County Public School System operates 25 public schools serving 11,000 students. The county's 13 elementary schools have an average enrollment of 350 students, ranging from about 170 at Barton Elementary to over 550 students at South Penn Elementary. The county's three middle schools range in size from less than 400 students at Westmar Middle to over 700 students at Braddock and Washington Middle. Enrollment at the county's four high schools range from about 500 at Westmar High to over 1,000 students at Fort Hill High. Allegany High has about 850 students and Beall Junior-Senior High has 750 students.

Allegany County also operates three combined schools for kindergarten through the 12th grade: Flintstone School with 400 students or about 30 students per grade; Mt. Savage School with less than 600 students or about 45 students per grade; and Oldtown School with less than 300 students or about 25 students per grade.

Allegany County has the fourth lowest wealth per pupil in the State and the sixth lowest per pupil expenditure (\$6,131), which is less than 90% of the statewide average (\$6,821). Around 60% of the operating revenues for the county's school system come from the State. Per pupil student transportation costs total \$477, which is less than the statewide average (\$495). The county's student enrollment has been declining in recent years by about 1% a year.

**Local Fiscal Effect:** The student transportation time and distance requirement has prevented the Allegany County Public School System from consolidating several smaller schools. The county school system operates several small schools including three combined K through 12 schools that serve fewer than 50 students per grade. Repealing the time and distance requirement for high school students provides the ability for the school system to alter the attendance boundaries for high school students thus enabling the school system to consolidate its high school programs to fewer schools.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Allegany County Public School System, Allegany County, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 25, 2000  
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