

Department of Legislative Services

Maryland General Assembly

2002 Session

FISCAL NOTE

Senate Bill 27

(Senator Mooney)

Judicial Proceedings

School Buses - Years in Service - Time Limit Extension Requirements

This bill repeals the requirement that the State Superintendent of Schools grant approval for the use of a school bus that has been in operation for more than 12 years.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any increase in school bus inspections by the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) could be handled with existing resources. Any reduction in the processing of paperwork by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) would not materially affect State finances.

Local Effect: Potential reduction in school bus expenditures for local school systems. The reduction could be offset by an increase in school bus maintenance and inspection costs.

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: Unless it fails to meet safety standards, a school bus may be operated for up to 12 years. A school bus may be operated for more than 12 years if: (1) the State Superintendent of Schools grants approval; (2) the bus is maintained under a preventative maintenance plan that is approved by the MVA and the Department of State Police and includes semiannual inspections; (3) any structural repairs to the bus meet or exceed the manufacturer's original manufacturing standards, as certified by an independent expert

approved by the MVA; and (4) the bus is properly equipped with specified safety features.

Background: In the 1998-1999 school year, 2,947 publicly owned and 2,755 privately owned school buses were used to transport students in Maryland. Sixteen local school systems used a combination of publicly owned and contract buses, six used only contract buses, and two used only publicly owned buses. Local school systems spent nearly \$316 million on student transportation in fiscal 1999, or \$522 per student transported.

Local Fiscal Effect: In general, MSDE and the State Superintendent of Schools do not allow school buses that are more than 14 years old to be used to transport students. If the need for the State Superintendent's approval of older school buses is repealed, local school systems could continue to use school buses as long as the buses meet the other safety requirements. School buses cost approximately \$50,000. If the bill allows a local school system to avoid the purchase of new buses, there could be a reduction in expenditures. For school systems that contract for school bus services, contract prices could decrease if costs for school bus providers decrease. Any reduction in expenditures for local school systems, however, would be at least partially offset by increases in maintenance and inspection costs.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Transportation (Motor Vehicle Administration), Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 22, 2002
lc/hlb

Analysis by: Mark W. Collins

Direct Inquiries to:
John Rixey, Coordinating Analyst
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510