

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2003 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 173 (Senator Jacobs, *et al.*)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Public Schools - Indoor Air Quality Inspections

This bill requires each local board of education to develop a system of monitoring indoor air quality at each public school in the county using the guidelines for healthy indoor air quality established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in consultation with the Department of the Environment (MDE), must develop and distribute a Maryland Public Schools Indoor Air Quality Standards Guide to each public school. The guide must include the guidelines of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for healthy indoor air quality; a sample indoor air quality inspection report; and a sample heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system maintenance schedule and checklist.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. MSDE and MDE could establish and distribute an indoor air quality standards guide to public schools with existing resources.

Local Effect: Local school expenditures could increase by a minimal amount to perform annual indoor air quality inspections. Revenues would not be affected. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Public schools are not required to conduct an annual indoor air quality inspection to ensure that the school's air quality complies with the indoor air quality guidelines of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Background: EPA has taken an active role in improving indoor air quality in public schools by documenting the effects of poor indoor air quality and developing resources to assist local school systems in monitoring and improving indoor air quality.

Studies show that one-half of the nation's 115,000 schools have problems linked to indoor air quality. Students are at greater risk because of the hours spent in school facilities and because children are especially susceptible to pollutants. Common factors leading to poor indoor air include failure to:

- control pollution sources such as art supplies and laboratory activities;
- control temperature and humidity;
- control moisture and clean up spills;
- ventilate each classroom adequately;
- adequately perform housekeeping and maintenance operations; and
- use integrated pest management to minimize the use of pesticides.

Failure to respond promptly and effectively to poor indoor air quality in schools can cause severe consequences, including absenteeism, health problems in children and faculty, and the possibility of school classrooms or entire schools being closed. Poor indoor air quality has been linked to asthma-related illness, which is one of the leading causes of school absenteeism.

To assist public schools, EPA has published voluntary guidelines that address indoor air quality in schools and has developed an Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Tools for Schools Kit that shows schools how to carry out a practical plan of action to improve indoor air problems at little or no cost using straightforward activities and in-house staff. The kit helps school personnel identify, solve, and prevent indoor air quality problems in the school environment through a 19-step management plan and checklists for the entire building. The checklists cover a school building's ventilation system, maintenance procedures, classrooms, and food service areas. The kit also includes a Coordinator's Guide that explains the fundamentals of indoor air quality in schools and procedures for improving the air inside the schools. Schools and local school systems can receive a copy of the IAQ Tools for School Kit at no cost by contacting EPA. EPA has developed several training guides to assist schools in improving indoor air quality.

MSDE advises that in Maryland monitoring indoor air quality is the responsibility of the local school system's central office, not individual schools. Furthermore, the indoor air quality guidelines developed by EPA are not appropriate for public schools in Maryland due to the large size of local school systems. Professional staff from the central office are

better equipped than principals and teachers to manage indoor quality in the State's public schools.

State Fiscal Effect: MSDE advises that implementing the bill's requirements would cost approximately \$50,000 in fiscal 2004 with no additional costs in future years. This estimate includes \$27,000 for a part-time contractual employee to develop and distribute the IAQ standards guide; \$15,000 to purchase copies of the EPA Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Kit; \$4,500 for printing copies of the MSDE standards guide; and \$3,600 for various operating expenses. While EPA reports that copies of the IAQ Tools for School Kit are available at no cost, MSDE indicates that a \$10 per kit fee may be charged due to the large number of kits that the department would be requesting.

The Department of Legislative Services advises that existing staff within the department's school facilities branch could develop and distribute the IAQ standards guide. In addition, local school systems can receive a copy of the EPA's IAQ Tools for School Kit and the accompanying video at no cost by contacting the agency. The additional departmental expenses could be handled with existing resources.

Local Fiscal Effect: EPA indicates that existing school personnel at little or no additional costs can perform indoor air quality tests. Public schools and local school systems can receive a copy of the EPA's IAQ Tools for School Kit at no cost by contacting the agency. In addition, EPA has developed several training guides to assist schools in improving indoor air quality. If local school systems utilize existing staff and follow the guidelines established by EPA, indoor air quality inspections could be performed at minimal cost.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: A similar bill was introduced at the 2002 session as HB 675. The bill received a favorable with amendments report by the House Environmental Matters Committee and was adopted by the House with floor amendments. The bill received an unfavorable report by the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee.

Cross File: HB 93 (Delegate Boutin, *et al.*) – Environmental Matters.

Information Source(s): U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Maryland Association of Boards of Education, Maryland Department of the Environment, Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

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