

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2003 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

House Bill 276  
Ways and Means

(Allegany County Delegation)

Education, Health, and Environmental  
Affairs

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**Allegany County - Education - Transportation of Students**

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This bill eliminates the time and distance requirement that 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.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2003.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** None.

**Local Effect:** Repealing the time and distance requirement may reduce local school expenditures by providing additional flexibility to the Allegany County Board of Education in setting student transportation routes or altering 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. Other local school systems in the State can transport students for longer distances and periods of time.

**Background:** Allegany County has experienced a 10.7% decrease in student enrollment over the last ten years. To address this and other concerns, the Allegany Board of Education approved a consolidation plan during the 1998-1999 school year resulting in schools being closed, consolidated, and/or reconfigured. The consolidation plan was supported in a performance audit of the county's school system conducted by MGT of America during the 1999-2000 school year. MGT of America recommended that the school system increase the systemwide utilization rate of public schools to 85% and reorganize attendance zones to create community schools. This recommendation resulted in the Board of Education and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) hiring 3D/International to conduct a comprehensive facility utilization study of schools during the 2001-2002 school year. After reviewing the study's final report and receiving public input, on August 26, 2002, the Allegany County Superintendent of Schools released a long-range educational facilities plan that included recommendations to enhance the county's public schools over a five-year period. The Board of Education has not made a final decision on all of the components of the long-range plan.

The Allegany County Public School System operates 21 public schools, a career and technology education center, an alternative school, and two special programs. The school system serves approximately 10,000 students. The number of students enrolled at each public school is shown in **Exhibit 1**. The school system used to operate three combined schools for students in kindergarten through grade 12. The Board of Education closed one school completely (Oldtown) and converted one school (Flintstone) to an elementary school and the other school (Mount Savage) to a combined elementary/middle school.

**Local Fiscal Effect:** Repealing the time and distance requirement provides the ability for the Allegany County Public School System to alter its student transportation routes or school attendance boundaries. This may reduce local expenditures for student transportation and assist with any additional consolidation plans approved by the Board of Education

**Small Business Effect:** Private contractors are primarily responsible for student transportation services in Allegany County. Of the 123 school vehicles used by the county in 2000, private contractors operated 106 and the school system operated 17. Student transportation services are budgeted at \$4.5 million in fiscal 2003. Any impact on student transportation services in Allegany County would affect small businesses.

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## **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** A similar bill was introduced at the 2000 session as HB 806. The bill, which only repealed the time and distance requirement for students in grades nine through 12, was withdrawn.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Allegany County Board of Education, Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 10, 2003  
mdf/jr

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Analysis by: Hiram L. Burch Jr.

Direct Inquiries to:  
(410) 946-5510  
(301) 970-5510

**Exhibit 1**  
**Enrollment at Allegany County Public Schools**  
**2001-2002 School Year**

<u>School</u>	<u>Grades</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Grades</u>	<u>Students</u>
<b>Elementary</b>			<b>Combined</b>		
Beall	PreK - 5	324	Mount Savage	PreK - 8	791
Bel Air	K - 5	223			
Cash Valley	PreK - 5	363	<b>Middle</b>		
Cresaptown	PreK - 5	344	Braddock	6 - 8	716
Flintstone	PreK - 5	227	Washington	6 - 8	871
Frost	K - 5	258	Westmar	6 - 8	368
George's Creek	PreK - 5	364			
John Humbird	PreK - 5	336	<b>High</b>		
Northeast	PreK - 5	287	Allegany	9 - 12	814
Parkside	PreK - 5	293	Beall	9 - 12	588
South Penn	PreK - 5	553	Fort Hill	9 - 12	1,012
West Side	PreK - 5	343	Westmar	9 - 12	448
Westernport	PreK - 5	296			
<b>Special Schools</b>					
	Center for Career and Technology Education			11 - 12	280
	Eckhart Alternative School			6 - 12	71
	Allegany County Home and Hospital			5 - 12	4
	Transition Program at Frostburg			Special	6