

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2005 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**Revised**

Senate Bill 501

(Senator Dyson)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

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**Education - Task Force on School Safety**

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This bill establishes the Task Force on School Safety. The task force must evaluate a variety of methods and strategies that could be implemented to improve school safety and make recommendations regarding the use of the strategies. By majority vote, the task force may issue a subpoena that requires the appearance of a person, the production of records, and the provision of relevant testimony. A final report must be submitted by December 1, 2006. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) will provide staff for the task force.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2005 and terminates December 31, 2006.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** MSDE could staff the task force with existing personnel and resources. Other State officials appointed to the task force could participate with existing resources.

**Local Effect:** Local school officials appointed to the task force could participate with existing resources.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** Each local board of education must adopt regulations designed to create and maintain within the schools under its jurisdiction an atmosphere of order and discipline necessary for effective learning. As established in COMAR, all students in

Maryland public schools, without exception and regardless of race, ethnicity, region, religion, gender, sexual orientation, language, socioeconomic status, age, or disability, have the right to education environments that are safe, optimal for academic achievement, and free from any form of harassment.

**Background:** In 1999, after new school safety regulations were adopted by the State Board of Education, the board directed MSDE to develop an action plan to ensure that all students attend schools that are safe and free of harassment. A workgroup comprised of MSDE employees and local school system personnel developed a “Safe Schools Action Plan” that involves interventions for students and school staff, as well as parents and communities. The action plan was approved by the State board in January 2000. Local school boards have been required to submit their own safety plans annually since January 2001. School safety regulations were later updated to strengthen the identification of specific student subgroups that are included within the policy, and local school systems have updated their action plans to make sure they comply with the new regulations.

A July 2001 publication by the National Conference of State Legislatures, *What Works to Keep Schools Safe*, recommended that, in order to enhance school safety, schools should adopt policies designed to meet certain goals. The goals include:

- creating a school environment where students feel safe and problems do not start;
- helping students take the lead in keeping schools safe;
- ensuring that schools have the skills to identify at-risk students and the resources to intervene when problem behavior occurs;
- equipping students and teachers with the skills they need to avoid conflict and violence; and
- helping schools and individuals connect with the community and share resources.

The federal No Child Left Behind legislation enacted in January 2002 requires states to identify “persistently dangerous” schools. A student who attends a persistently dangerous school, as defined by each state, or is the victim of a violent crime while on school grounds must be given the option to transfer to another school in the district. The State Board of Education adopted regulations to comply with the federal law in 2003.

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## **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

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

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 4, 2005  
mll/rhh Revised - Senate Third Reader - March 24, 2005

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