

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 146

(Senator Dyson, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

Education - Task Force on School Safety

This bill establishes the Task Force on School Safety to evaluate a variety of methods and strategies that could be implemented to improve school safety and make recommendations regarding the use of the strategies. A final report is due by December 1, 2007. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must provide staff for the task force.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2006 and terminates December 31, 2007.

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.

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 State regulations, 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.

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. Six Baltimore City schools have been labeled persistently dangerous for the 2005-2006 school year.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: A similar bill was introduced last year as SB 501. The Senate passed the bill, but the House Ways and Means Committee took no action on it.

Cross File: None.

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

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ncs/rhh

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