

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2006 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

Senate Bill 756 (Senator Exum)  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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**Education - Alcohol and Drug Testing for Pupils in Public or Private Schools**

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This bill requires public and private schools to conduct drug tests for students in grades 9 through 12 for whom there is reasonable suspicion of unlawful alcohol or controlled dangerous substance use. Local boards of education and the governing boards of private schools must provide adequate notice of the drug testing policies to the parents and guardians of every student in the school, and records of drug tests must be kept confidential. Students who test positive must be referred to school counselors, substance abuse professionals, or other appropriate school staff in order to develop individualized courses of treatment that support scholastic success and address the unlawful use of alcohol or drugs.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Any additional administrative responsibilities for the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) that result from the bill could be handled with existing personnel and resources.

**Local Effect:** Local school expenditures would increase by an estimated \$65,000 to \$200,000 annually beginning in FY 2007 to train school staff to conduct drug tests and to administer an estimated 3,000 drug tests each year. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal. Private schools enrolling students in grades 9 through 12 would incur costs to drug test students.

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## Analysis

**Current Law:** Public schools must implement drug education programs that start before the sixth grade. If a student seeks information from a teacher, counselor, principal, or other professional educator to overcome drug abuse, the student's statement is not admissible against the student in any proceeding.

**Background:** A June 2002 U.S. Supreme Court ruling gave public schools added authority to test students for illegal drug use. In a document entitled "What You Need to Know About Drug Testing in Schools," the Office of National Drug Control Policy notes that the purpose of testing is to prevent drug dependence and suggests that a decision about whether to drug test students should be left to individual communities and schools. The report concludes that "parents and communities must make sure appropriate resources are in place to deal with students who test positive" before implementing drug testing programs.

MSDE advises that the federal government has supported random drug testing of students involved in school athletic programs or other school-sponsored activities as long as the students and their parents and guardians provide written consent to participate in the program. MSDE also notes that funding under the federal Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities program may be used to drug test students. In Maryland some of the funding for this program is used to do student surveys, which have indicated a downward trend in the use of alcohol and drugs.

Talbot County advises that it is currently under a court order prohibiting it from drug testing students.

**Local Expenditures:** Local school expenditures for drug testing will increase by an estimated \$65,000 to \$200,000, depending on the testing method that is used. This estimate was calculated using the following information and assumptions.

- Each high school will incur costs of approximately \$100 for two or three school employees to be trained in drug testing methods. With approximately 200 public high schools in the State, costs will total an estimated \$20,000.
- MSDE advises that the cost to perform a drug test ranges from approximately \$15 to \$60, depending on the type of test that is administered.
- There were 1,820 high school students suspended for possession or use of alcohol or drugs in the 2004-2005 school year. It is assumed that approximately 2,000 initial drug tests per year will be conducted at a cost of \$30,000 to \$120,000.

- Assuming half of these students test positive, costs for confirmation tests will total approximately \$15,000 to \$60,000.

These are ongoing costs that will be incurred annually beginning in fiscal 2007.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; Baltimore City and Allegany, Prince George's, Talbot, and Wicomico counties; Office of National Drug Control Policy; Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Mark W. Collins

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