

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2007 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 593
Ways and Means

(Delegate Stifler, *et al.*)

Public Schools - School Computers - Internet Filters

This bill requires local boards of education to adopt and implement policies and procedures to prevent minors from obtaining access through school computers to materials that are obscene or that constitute child pornography. The policies must be adopted, implemented, and submitted to the State Superintendent of Schools by January 1, 2008. Each local board or its designee must regularly monitor school computers to ensure compliance with the local board policy.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2007.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) could collect and review local school system Internet access policies with existing personnel and resources. The bill would ensure that the State continues to receive federal education funding and benefits that require schools to block or filter inappropriate Internet sites.

Local Effect: Local school systems could adopt, implement, and enforce any additional policies that are needed to meet the bill's requirements with existing resources. The bill would ensure that local school systems continue to receive federal education funding and benefits that require schools to block or filter inappropriate Internet sites.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: The federal Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) of 2000 prohibits a school or school system from using federal funds to purchase computers used to access the Internet or to pay for direct costs associated with accessing the Internet unless it has an Internet safety policy that blocks or filters minors' access to web sites that are obscene, contain child pornography, or are harmful to minors. Discounts from the federal E-rate program, which makes technology more affordable in qualifying schools and libraries, are also subject to these requirements. The comprehensive master plans submitted by each local school system must include a page that certifies that the school system is in compliance with CIPA.

Background: Chapter 9 of 2000 required public libraries to adopt and implement policies and procedures to prevent minors from obtaining access through library computers to materials that are obscene or that constitute child pornography. Although there is no parallel State law for public schools, MSDE advises that school systems are in compliance with the federal standards enacted under CIPA, which allows the systems to receive federal technology funds and benefits. According to MSDE, school systems are receiving approximately \$1.7 million in technology grants in fiscal 2007 through the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

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