

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2012 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 724
Ways and Means

(Delegate Kaiser, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**State Department of Education - School Guidance Counselors and Pupil
Personnel Workers - Reporting**

This bill requires each local school system to submit to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) by December 31, 2012, a description of the local school system's guidance counselor program and the local school system's pupil personnel worker program. Each description must include (1) data relating to the number of school guidance counselors and pupil personnel workers employed by the local school system; (2) the general duties and responsibilities of the school guidance counselors and pupil personnel workers; (3) the activities of the school guidance counselors that are designed to promote the college readiness of students in grades 6 through 12; (4) the number of students each school guidance counselor and pupil personnel worker is responsible for; and (5) any other related information requested by MSDE. By December 31, 2013, MSDE must submit a report to the General Assembly that includes the data collected and information compiled by the local school systems and the feasibility of and costs associated with the establishment of a college readiness program implemented through school guidance counselors that targets students in grades 6 through 12.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2012, and terminates June 30, 2014.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MSDE can compile the required data and produce the required feasibility report using existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: Local school systems can conduct the required survey of their school guidance counselor and pupil personnel worker programs using existing resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: According to Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), the School Counseling Program is a planned, systematic program of counseling, consulting, appraisal, information, and placement services for students in kindergarten through grade 12. The services are intended to help a student demonstrate personal and academic growth, make appropriate educational and career decisions, and have productive interactions with others. Specifically, the School Counseling Program must encourage development of educational and career decisionmaking skills so that a student will comprehend aptitudes, interests, and experiences as they relate to individual career development; apply the steps of decisionmaking to any situation; develop an approved four-year high school plan of study; analyze various careers that are appropriate to an individual's aptitudes, interests, and experiences; identify appropriate career opportunities; select the most relevant educational or vocational training programs; formulate and appropriately modify a personal career development plan; and demonstrate useful employment-keeping skills.

A ratio of school counselors to students is not mandated in COMAR; however, generally elementary schools have one certified school counselor, and middle and high schools have two to five certified school counselors, depending on the size of the school. To become a certified school counselor, an applicant must meet a number of qualifications including having a master's degree in school guidance and counseling.

COMAR recommends one person responsible for the supervision of the pupil personnel services for the first 2,500 students enrolled and one pupil personnel worker (visiting teacher, school social worker, or school psychologist) for each additional 2,500 students. To become a pupil personnel worker, an applicant must have a master's degree in pupil personnel or a related field, three years of satisfactory teaching experience or the recommendation of a local superintendent of schools (two years of related experience may be substituted for two years of teaching experience) and three semester hours of credit or State-approved continuing professional development credits in inclusion of special needs student populations.

According to MSDE, determining the feasibility and costs associated with establishing a college readiness program implemented through school guidance counselors is entirely dependent on the scope of the program implemented. A program could range from hiring dedicated career counselors for each high school to purchasing web based career and college planning programs known as career information systems. In October 2011, the average salary and benefits for a guidance counselor was approximately \$88,500 and there were approximately 402 middle and high schools (excluding combined elementary/middle schools); therefore, it would cost approximately \$35.6 million to hire an additional guidance counselor for each middle and high school. MSDE reports that

career information systems cost approximately \$500 per school; therefore, it would cost approximately \$201,000 per year to have a system in each middle and high school.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

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