

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2016 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 142
Ways and Means

(Delegate Hixson, *et al.*)

Education - Health and Safety - Emotional Health Awareness Programs

This bill requires each local school system to implement a program to provide awareness of the five signs of emotional suffering to students, parents and guardians, school personnel, and coaches. Each local school system must also implement a program to provide all middle and high school student athletes and coaches with the tools to have a positive and character-building youth sports experience.

To carry out the requirements of the bill, a local school system may use materials available from the Campaign to Change Direction, the Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA), or any other appropriate entity. A local school system may also collaborate with organizations with expertise in emotional health or transforming the culture of youth sports. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must adopt regulations to carry out requirements of the bill.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2016.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. MSDE can adopt regulations using existing resources.

Local Effect: In some counties, local school system expenditures increase annually beginning in FY 2017. The increased cost will depend on each school system's size and the extent to which requirements of the bill are being met under current practice. **This bill may impose a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: According to the Code of Maryland Regulations, the School Psychology Program is a comprehensive continuum of services and activities based on psychological principles. The goal of the program is to prevent or remediate educational, emotional, or behavioral problems by identifying, analyzing, and reporting psychoeducational needs through consultation, observation, or psychological and educational assessment.

Among the many authorized interventions at the local school system level to meet student needs are staff development activities to help apply psychological principles to education. One goal of the program must be to assist in optimal health development so that the student will (among other “subgoals”) (1) be aware of his or her own level of well-being and (2) develop psychological skills that foster optimal mental health.

Background: The bill does not specify the five signs of emotional suffering, but according to the Campaign to Change Direction, they are personality change, agitation, withdrawal, poor self-care, and hopelessness. According to the campaign’s website:

“The Change Direction initiative is a collection of concerned citizens, nonprofit leaders, and leaders from the private sector who have come together to change the culture in America about mental health, mental illness, and wellness. This initiative was inspired by the discussion at the White House National Conference on Mental Health in 2013, which came on the heels of the Newtown, [Connecticut] tragedy.”

PCA “is a national non-profit developing ‘Better Athletes, Better People’ by working to provide all youth and high school athletes a positive, character-building youth sports experience.” The alliance offers live workshops, online courses, books by the founder of the alliance, as well as resources on its website.

Local Expenditures: To the extent that local school systems currently meet some or all of the proposed requirements, local expenditures will not be significantly affected. Some local school systems already partner with PCA to provide similar services to their students at minimal cost. According to MSDE, Cecil County presently expends \$10,000 annually through a partnership with PCA, which provides three annual workshops for the county’s coaches. Similarly, Prince George’s County advises that its annual cost for workshops provided to coaches by PCA totals approximately \$6,350 and that its current practice generally meets the requirements of the bill. Therefore, Prince George’s County anticipates no added costs under the bill.

The estimated cost for other local school systems range from \$5,000 to \$120,000. Queen Anne’s County advises that two additional counselors may need to be hired at an annual cost of \$120,000. Montgomery County estimates an additional annual cost of

\$50,000, whereas Carroll County indicates its annual expenditures will increase by \$5,000 to integrate the bill's requirements into its existing programming, plus additional costs for information dissemination.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Change Direction Campaign; Positive Coaching Alliance; Carroll, Montgomery, Prince George's, and Queen Anne's counties; Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Association of Boards of Education; Department of Legislative Services

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