

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2018 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 1264

(Senator Jennings, *et al.*)

Judicial Proceedings

**Primary and Secondary Schools - Law Enforcement Presence (School Safety Act
2018: Deterrence)**

This bill requires each public school to have an armed school resource officer (SRO) present on school grounds during regular school hours on school days. If a public school is unable to meet the bill's requirement, the Department of State Police (DSP) must assign a State Police officer to the school. The bill also authorizes a private school to have an armed SRO present on school grounds. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2018.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by approximately \$224,300 in FY 2019 for every State Police officer that must be hired, trained, and assigned to a public school to which the local school system is unable to provide an armed SRO. Total first-year costs could be as high as \$224.3 million in FY 2019, which assumes that the State covers the full cost of a State Police officer assigned to any school that does not currently have an armed SRO. Ongoing annual costs would be roughly half as much, subject to annual increases in compensation. No effect on revenues.

Local Effect: Local expenditures by local law enforcement agencies and/or school boards increase significantly to recruit, hire, and train an armed SRO for every school that does not currently have one; however, local expenditures do not increase to the extent that a local school system is unable to comply with the bill's requirements. Costs vary by county, but total local expenditures could be as much as \$224.3 million in FY 2019, assuming local jurisdictions cover the full cost of armed SROs in every school, with ongoing annual costs of roughly half that amount subject to annual increases in compensation. No effect on revenues. **This bill may impose a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: Armed SROs or State Police officers assigned to a public school must:

- perform screenings at the entrance to the school;
- regularly patrol school grounds;
- interact with students; and
- participate in any fire drill or other school drill.

An armed SRO or State Police officer may use a dog licensed under State law to perform the duties specified above.

Each local law enforcement agency *must* collaborate with each public school in its jurisdiction to establish a reasonable time for responding to an emergency at the public school. Each local law enforcement agency *may* collaborate with each private school in its jurisdiction for the same purpose.

Current Law: A school resource officer is a law enforcement officer who has been assigned to a school in accordance with a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the chief of a law enforcement agency and the local school system.

A Baltimore City school police officer is a person who, when acting in an official capacity, is authorized by law to make arrests and who is a member of the Baltimore City School Police Force. A Baltimore City school police officer whose permanent or temporary assignment is at a school or on school property may carry a firearm on the premises of the school before or after regular school hours on school days and on days other than school days. *A Baltimore City school police officer is not authorized to carry a weapon on school grounds during school hours.*

Background: There are approximately 1,400 public schools in the State; however, some schools share facilities with other schools and could likely share an SRO under the bill.

Based on survey data collected by the Maryland Center for School Safety, there are between 360 and 400 SROs currently assigned to Maryland public schools, or an average of one SRO for every 4 to 5 schools. Baltimore City Public Schools has the highest number, with 93 armed school police officers (plus 8 vacancies) for its approximately 173 public schools (although they are not armed during school hours). Montgomery County Public Schools, like many other school systems that responded to the survey, assigns an armed SRO only to each of its *high* schools.

SROs are typically provided through MOUs between a local school board and one or more local law enforcement agencies, including sheriff's departments and county or municipal police departments. Funding arrangements vary by county, but in most counties the local law enforcement agencies bear the cost of providing SROs. The biggest exception is Baltimore City, in which the board of education funds the school police force.

State Expenditures: Under the bill, the State incurs a cost only if a public school is unable to provide a full-time, armed SRO as required the bill. In that instance, DSP must assign a State Police officer to the school on a full-time basis. DSP would have to recruit, train, and hire new State troopers to fill those positions. The cost of a new State Police officer is approximately \$224,300 for the first year, which includes the following expenses:

- \$101,617 for a salary and fringe benefits (not including overtime);
- \$61,675 to complete training provided by the State Police Academy;
- \$59,000 for a fully equipped police car; and
- \$2,054 for uniforms and equipment.

Based on a need for at least 1,000 SROs to be assigned to schools that currently do not have an SRO, the first-year cost to the State could be as much as \$224.3 million if the State Police must assign an officer to every public school currently without an armed SRO. This also assumes that the State bears the full cost of the State Police officers. To the extent that State Police may require local jurisdictions to reimburse the State for some or all of the costs, State expenditures decrease. Costs do not include any additional supervisors or overtime expenditures that may be needed. Out-year costs include only the salary and fringe benefits, which are subject to annual increases.

Local Expenditures: Local school systems need to hire approximately 1,000 SROs in order to assign one to every school in the State. To the extent that they are unable to do so, they do not have to because DSP would then be required to assign a State Police officer to schools that do not have an SRO. Costs for complying with the bill's requirement vary by local school system. Montgomery County estimates an initial cost of \$30.4 million, with ongoing costs of \$14.2 million annually. Talbot County estimates a first-year cost of \$511,875, and Anne Arundel County estimates a first-year cost of \$7.0 million. Overall, the Department of Legislative Services estimates that the first-year cost of hiring an SRO for every school that does not currently have one would be comparable to the \$224 million that the State would have to spend to assign a State Police officer to every school, with ongoing costs of approximately \$105 million.

Additional Comments: The Department of Legislative Services notes that the bill includes Baltimore City school police officers in the definition of armed school resource

officers even though they are not permitted by law to be armed on school grounds during school hours.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Dorchester, Garrett, Howard, and Montgomery counties; Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Association of Boards of Education; Department of State Police; Department of Legislative Services

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