

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 723
Ways and Means

(Delegate Boteler, *et al.*)

Task Force to Evaluate Existing School Civic Literacy Programs

This bill establishes a task force to evaluate existing school civic literacy programs, determine a strategy for enhancing long-term civic education, and make recommendations for implementing a civic education program. Findings and recommendations are due to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the Governor, and the General Assembly by December 1, 2020. MSDE must provide staff for the task force. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2020, and terminates July 31, 2021.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Expense reimbursements for task force members and staff support can be handled with existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Civic literacy often refers to the capacity of an informed citizen to participate fully and successfully in government, exercising the rights and obligations of citizenship. State regulations require each local school system to provide an instructional program in social studies each year for all students in grades prekindergarten to 8; and offer a social studies program in grades 9 to 12, which enables students to meet graduation requirements and to select social studies electives. The comprehensive instructional program must provide for the diversity of student needs, abilities, and interests at the early, middle, and high school learning years, and must include the content standards set forth in

the College, Career, and Civic Life Framework for Social Studies. Under the civics portion of these standards, students must understand the historical development and current status of the fundamental concepts and processes of government including authority, power, and influence, with particular emphasis on the democratic skills and attitudes necessary to become responsible citizens; and engage in political participation and contribute to the public process.

Background: Chapter 160 of 2007 established the Commission on Civic Literacy, for a period of five years, to promote civic education in schools. In collaboration with schools, the commission developed and coordinated programs to educate students in the importance of reasoned debate, good-faith negotiation, and compromise in representative democracy; individual involvement in communities; and consideration and respect for others in deliberating, negotiating, and advocating positions on public concerns. Civic education projects in Maryland were identified by the commission and technical assistance provided for those projects as needed. The commission also developed an [Internet clearinghouse](#) with civic education resources, including lesson plans. The commission released its [final report](#) in November of 2012.

In June 2018, the State Superintendent of Schools initiated the Maryland Civic Architecture Symposium. During the symposium, stakeholders reviewed opportunities for civic education and engagement in Maryland's public schools in order to identify areas of strength and growth in order to recommend actions to strengthen the civic architecture of public schools in Maryland. MSDE advises that the symposium report includes an evaluation of the current state of civic literacy in Maryland and recommendations regarding further strengthening the civic education program in Maryland. According to MSDE, the recommendations in this report are currently in varying stages of implementation.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HB 1369 of 2019 was referred to the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee, but no further action was taken. HB 1072 of 2005, a similar bill, received a hearing in the House Ways and Means Committee, but no further action was taken.

Designated Cross File: None.

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

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