

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 1141

(Delegate Boteler)

Appropriations

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Baltimore County - Public Schools - Air Quality Testing

This bill requires the Baltimore County Board of Education to retain the services of a qualified indoor air quality investigator to conduct indoor air quality testing whenever the board requires such tests. The board also must make the results of the tests available on its website and submit the test results to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) for publication on the department's website. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2021.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MSDE can publish the required information with existing resources.

Local Effect: Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) expenditures increase by an indeterminate amount to hire qualified indoor air quality investigators, as discussed below. BCPS can publish test results with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: In fiscal 2020 through 2021, the Baltimore County Public Schools Office of Facilities Support Services was charged with enhancing the BCPS Indoor Air Quality Program. The office performed an overall ventilation system inspection and repair for the entire portfolio of all 157 elementary, middle, and high schools in Baltimore County.

At the State level, the Board of Public Works, in consultation with the Department of General Services and the Department of Housing and Community Development, must

develop regulations establishing criteria to enhance indoor air quality in relocatable classrooms constructed after July 1, 2014, which are purchased or leased using State or local funds. Public school buildings that are newly constructed or substantially remodeled must install carbon monoxide detectors in areas where fuel-fired equipment is present.

Additionally, the Healthy School Facility Fund allows the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) to award grants to schools based on the severity of issues including, among others, air quality.

Local Fiscal Effect: Based on information provided by MSDE regarding a similar school district's air quality testing, the average cost of a comprehensive school air quality inspection and report by a certified air quality inspector is approximately \$5,000. For a less comprehensive test, IAC advises that hiring an air quality inspector to take between two to four samples in a facility would cost up to \$1,500 to identify particulates, mold, and carbon dioxide. The commission's estimate, however, does not include tests for specific levels of toxicity such as asbestos or radon that would increase the cost of an air quality test.

BCPS advises it currently has professional staff with capability to investigate air quality internally and determine if outside help is needed. However, if the bill requires every investigation to be conducted by a third party, significant costs could be incurred. BCPS further advises that the county's history does not indicate the need for air quality assessments on a frequent basis and, therefore, if tests are only required when BCPS determines they are needed, costs would be limited.

The Department of Legislative Services advises that the bill does not change the standards or frequency of testing for BCPS and allows the board to decide when testing is needed. Therefore, because the bill only requires independent investigations when the board deems them necessary, expenditures under the bill increase to the extent costs to contract for indoor air quality tests exceed the cost of the indoor air quality tests normally conducted by BCPS.

For illustrative purposes, if the board were to test all 157 elementary, middle and high schools in a given year, the total cost to hire a qualified indoor air quality investigator for a comprehensive air quality test would be approximately \$785,000. If the board were to test all 157 elementary, middle and high schools in a given year, the total cost for a less comprehensive air quality test would likely be about \$235,500. These cost increases would be offset to the extent that BCPS no longer utilizes its own staff capabilities to conduct air quality testing.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Interagency Commission on School Construction; Baltimore County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Michael E. Sousane

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510