

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2022 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 576 (Senator Klausmeier)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Public Schools - Air Quality Testing - Posting Online

This bill requires each county board of education to retain the services of a qualified indoor air quality investigator to conduct indoor air quality testing whenever the board chooses to conduct such tests. Each county 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. Results posted on the websites of each county board and MSDE must be written in a manner that is easy for the public to understand and posted in a conspicuous location that is easy for the public to find and access. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2022.**

Fiscal Summary

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

Local Effect: Local education agency (LEA) expenditures may increase by indeterminate amounts to hire qualified indoor air quality investigators, as discussed below. County boards of education can publish test results with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: 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, 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.

The bill only requires independent investigations when a county board of education deems them necessary, and therefore, local expenditures under the bill are largely discretionary and increase only to the extent costs to contract for indoor air quality tests exceed the cost of the indoor air quality tests normally conducted by local school systems. To the extent some LEAs use their own professional staff to investigate air quality internally, costs to contract for an external air quality investigator may be offset.

Costs will vary greatly across different sized LEAs. *For illustrative purposes only*, for an LEA with approximately 160 schools, the total cost to hire a qualified indoor air quality investigator for a comprehensive air quality test would be approximately \$800,000. If the LEA tested 160 schools, the total cost for a less comprehensive air quality test would likely be about \$240,000.

Anne Arundel County Public Schools advises that, because the bill does not proscribe any specific amount of testing or reporting (only that qualified indoor air quality investigators conduct testing when it occurs), the bill can be accommodated with existing resources.

Baltimore City Public Schools Advises that the bill will cost around \$260,000 to purchase necessary air quality testing equipment and to retain the services of qualified indoor air quality investigators year-round to respond to complaints. However, The Department of Legislative Services advises that the bill does not require county boards to respond to all complaints, only to retain a qualified indoor air quality investigator when the county board chooses to conduct indoor air quality testing.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: HB 665 (Delegate Jackson, *et al.*) - Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Public School Construction Program; Maryland Department of the Environment; Baltimore City Public Schools; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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