

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2023 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 491

(Charles County Senators)

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Environment and Transportation

Charles County - Task Force to Study School Bus Operator Contracts and Wages

This bill establishes the Task Force to Study School Bus Operator Contracts and Wages in Charles County. The Maryland Department of Labor (MDL) must provide staff for the task force. A member of the task force may not receive compensation but is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State Travel Regulations. The task force must (1) study issues related to student transportation, bus driver wages, and multi-year contracts for bus contractors in Charles County and (2) research best practices in surrounding jurisdictions related to the facilitation of student transportation. The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Charles County Delegation to the General Assembly by September 1, 2023. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2023, and terminates June 30, 2024.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MDL can staff the task force with existing resources, but staff may be diverted from other critical functions. Any expense reimbursements for task force members are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect Charles County finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: At its own expense, a county governing body may provide transportation for public school students (in addition to the transportation provided by the State).

Student transportation services in the State are generally provided by a combination of government-owned school vehicles and private contractors. Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) primarily uses private contractors to transport students. Contractors operating the buses are not considered CCPS employees.

Additional Comments: A copy of the [CCPS master school bus contract](#) for the 2022-2023 school year is available online.

The [fiscal 2023 CCPS budget](#) includes \$38.6 million in funding for student transportation services. The school system's current operational bus fleet consists of 382 total buses (13 buses owned by CCPS and 369 contractual buses).

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Charles County; Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Labor; Maryland Department of Transportation; Charles County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 20, 2023
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