

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2023 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1137 (Delegate Mangione, *et al.*)

Environment and Transportation and
Ways and Means

Workgroup to Study School Bus Safety (Maryland School Bus Safety Act of
2023)

This bill establishes the Workgroup to Study School Bus Safety. Workgroup members are appointed by the Governor. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), in consultation with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), must provide staff to the workgroup. The workgroup must study and identify issues related to safety for (and behavior of) students and bus drivers on buses driven to or from a primary or secondary school in the State. The workgroup must report its findings and recommendations to the governing body of each county (including Baltimore City), the local boards of education, the Governor, and the General Assembly by June 30, 2024. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2023, and terminates June 30, 2025.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MDOT can staff the workgroup with existing budgeted resources. Any expense reimbursements for workgroup members are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: The driver of a school bus is responsible for its operation and may not drive it into any roadway without first stopping and determining that there is no danger from any

other vehicle. The person responsible for any pupils on a school bus is a teacher on the bus or, if no teacher is present, the driver.

Student Transportation Services

Local school systems spent on average \$650 million for student transportation services prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. In fiscal 2021, student transportation expenditures statewide totaled \$558.1 million. During the 2021-2022 school year, approximately 637,000 students received transportation services, including 27,200 disabled students. Student transportation services are provided by a combination of government-owned school vehicles and private contractors. Local school systems in seven counties (Baltimore, Frederick, Kent, Montgomery, Prince George's, Talbot, and Washington) primarily use government-owned school vehicles to transport students, whereas one local school system (Caroline) uses a combination of government-owned and private contractors. Local school systems in the other jurisdictions primarily use private contractors to transport students. In total, local school systems use about 7,100 school vehicles for student transportation services.

Additional information on student transportation services in public schools can be found in the [FY 2022 End-of-Year Pupil Transportation Report](#) prepared by MSDE.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

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

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