

HOUSE BILL 583

F1

5lr2058

By: **Delegates Vogel and Miller**

Introduced and read first time: January 23, 2025

Assigned to: Ways and Means

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Primary and Secondary Education – Virtual Schools – Alterations**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring each county board of education to establish a virtual school;
4 providing a certain standard for the criteria for enrollment in a virtual school
5 established by the State Department of Education or a county board; providing that
6 a certain outreach campaign be conducted equitably; and generally relating to
7 virtual schools.

8 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

9 Article – Education

10 Section 7–1402(a) and 7–1403

11 Annotated Code of Maryland

12 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

13 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,

14 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

15 **Article – Education**

16 7–1402.

17 (a) (1) **(I)** Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection and
18 subject to the approval of the Department, a county board [may] **SHALL** establish one
19 virtual school for the elementary, middle, and high school grade bands.

20 **(II) A COUNTY BOARD THAT DETERMINES THAT IT IS UNABLE TO**
21 **OFFER A VIRTUAL SCHOOL TO STUDENTS IN THE COUNTY ON ITS OWN IS**
22 **ENCOURAGED TO COLLABORATE WITH ONE OR MORE OTHER COUNTY BOARDS TO**
23 **JOINTLY ESTABLISH A VIRTUAL SCHOOL.**

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 (2) The Department may provide preliminary authorization to a county
2 board to establish one additional virtual school on a showing of just cause, as determined
3 by the Department.

4 (3) The Department may revoke approval of a virtual school if during the
5 previous school year the virtual school fails to meet the standards established by the
6 Department in regulation.

7 (4) (i) A county board may appeal a denial or revocation of approval for
8 the establishment of a virtual school to the State Board for adjudication during a public
9 hearing.

10 (ii) The State Board shall develop an appeals process to carry out the
11 provisions of this paragraph.

12 7-1403.

13 (a) A student who is eligible for enrollment in a public school in the State is
14 eligible to enroll in a virtual school.

15 (b) **(1) THE CRITERIA ESTABLISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT OR A COUNTY**
16 **BOARD FOR ENROLLMENT IN A VIRTUAL SCHOOL SHALL BE REASONABLE AND MAY**
17 **NOT UNDULY INTERFERE WITH AN APPLICANT'S ABILITY TO ENROLL IN A VIRTUAL**
18 **SCHOOL.**

19 **(2)** In addition to the criteria established by the Department or a county
20 board, an application for enrollment in a virtual school shall require an applicant to
21 describe why instruction in a virtual learning environment will lead to successful academic
22 outcomes for the applicant.

23 (c) (1) (i) Subject to subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, not more than
24 10% of the students who would otherwise attend a single public school in the county in any
25 school year may enroll in a virtual school established by a county board.

26 (ii) A sudden decrease in enrollment in a single public school that
27 results in 10% or more of the students who would otherwise attend that public school
28 attending a virtual school established by a county board is not a violation of this paragraph.

29 (2) The Department may authorize a county board to exceed the cap under
30 paragraph (1) of this subsection on a showing of just cause.

31 (d) (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, if a county board
32 receives more applications than there are available spaces in a virtual school, the county
33 board shall admit all students on a lottery basis.

34 (2) A county board shall give greater weight to a student's lottery status as
35 a part of a lottery held under paragraph (1) of this subsection based on demographic

1 diversity under subsection (e) of this section and any other criteria established by the
2 county board.

3 (e) To the extent practicable, the student body of a virtual school shall reflect the
4 socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, cultural, and gender diversity of the students enrolled in the
5 public school system in the county.

6 (f) (1) The county board shall develop an **EQUITABLE** outreach campaign to
7 provide information to the public on the availability of the virtual school option.

8 (2) The **EQUITABLE** outreach campaign shall be designed to encourage
9 applications from students who meet the intent of subsection (e) of this section, including
10 the production of materials and communications in languages spoken by more than the
11 percentage of the student population in the local school system determined appropriate by
12 the county board.

13 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
14 1, 2025.