

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 540 (Delegate Wolek)
 Ways and Means

Maryland Green Schools - Website, Outreach, and Designations (Green Schools Stewardship Act)

This bill requires the Governor to include \$70,000 the fiscal 2027 budget bill and \$40,000 in the fiscal 2028 budget bill for the Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE) to (1) update and maintain its Maryland Green Schools website, as specified, by March 1, 2027; (2) conduct outreach activities; and (3) update its award application. Each local board of education must (1) prominently display a link on the local board’s website to the updated Maryland Green Schools website and (2) within the first two weeks of the first and third quarter of each school year, circulate information to teachers and staff about the green school program and the website. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) – in collaboration with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), MAEOE, and other relevant parties – must establish criteria for designating green schools mentor schools. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$70,000 in FY 2027 and by \$40,000 in FY 2028 due to the mandated appropriation. DNR and MSDE can collaborate using existing resources; however, resources may be redirected from current priorities. Revenues are not affected. **This bill establishes a mandated appropriation for FY 2027 and 2028.**

(in dollars)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	0	70,000	40,000	0	0
Net Effect	\$0	(\$70,000)	(\$40,000)	\$0	\$0

Note: () = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: Local school systems can post a website link and circulate the required information using existing resources. A green school may choose to pursue the additional designation; any impact stemming from that choice is therefore discretionary. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary:

Website

In general, MAEOE must update the [website](#) to include (1) a novice section dedicated to introducing schools to the concept of becoming a green school as specified; (2) an on-ramp section dedicated to helping schools transition from stand-alone green activities to more complicated green activities and projects and development of outlined plans for becoming a certified green school, as specified; (3) an application section; and (4) contact information as specified, including county environmental literacy specialists, experts from facilities awarded the Maryland Green Center Award, and green leaders.

Outreach Activities

MAEOE must regularly (1) conduct in-person information sessions to educate county superintendents, administrators, teachers, and parents about the program and (2) contact schools to gauge their interest and capacity for starting green activities.

Designation of Green Schools Mentor Schools

The criteria for designating a green school as a mentor school may include consideration of specified factors, including a school's experience providing guidance to educators and schools on how to transition their school to a green school.

MSDE must designate MAEOE to determine whether a school meets the criteria to obtain a mentor school designation, which may include the consideration of specified factors. The designation is valid for one year.

MAEOE must update its award application by September 1, 2026, to allow applicants to indicate their interest in obtaining a green schools mentor school designation.

Current Law: Chapters 739 and 740 of 2019, as amended by Chapter 524 of 2022, require the Governor to include in the State budget specified funding for MAEOE in fiscal 2021 through 2028, for the purpose of increasing the number of green schools in the State. An annual evaluation of the impact of this funding must be conducted in calendar 2022 through 2029.

The dollar amounts that may be used by MAEOE are specified under five particular categories to:

- support professional development, assist with student transportation to and from environmentally focused activities, or support school projects that incorporate specified environmental best practices;
- increase the number of environmental educators in the State who will provide green schools training and assist schools with becoming green schools;
- support statewide green school events;
- conduct an annual evaluation by an independent contractor of the impact of the funds provided under the bill on increasing the number of green schools in the State; and
- create an online application form for a school to apply for funding under the bill.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 997 of 2024 and HB 1102 of 2024.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Budget and Management; Maryland Department of the Environment; Department of Natural Resources; Baltimore City Public Schools; Baltimore County Public Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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