

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2025 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

House Bill 612  
Ways and Means

(Delegate Guyton, *et al.*)

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**Public Schools - Lifesaver Schools Program - Establishment**

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This bill establishes the Lifesaver Schools Program to recognize public schools that provide health and safety training to students and school personnel. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must designate and publicly recognize a public school as a Lifesaver School if the school applies and meets the criteria adopted by MSDE. A school must reapply to MSDE once every four years to maintain designation. A public school may partner with the local board of education to fulfill MSDE's criteria to qualify as a Lifesaver School. MSDE must adopt regulations to implement the bill. A LifeSaver School may utilize a certified therapy dog program in the school. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.**

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** MSDE can establish the program and designate qualifying schools using existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

**Local Effect:** To the extent that a school wishes to be recognized as a Lifesaver School, local expenditures (including potentially those of local health departments (LHDs) that employ public school nurses) may increase and operations may be affected to achieve the recognition. However, any expenditures or operational changes are discretionary. Revenues are not affected.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## Analysis

**Bill Summary:** At a minimum, MSDE's criteria for a Lifesaver School must require a public school to:

- offer to students (1) evidence-based training on first aid; (2) a mental health wellness program or a peer mentoring program; and (3) a schoolwide assembly on mental health wellness and resources;
- provide service hours to students for participating in health and safety activities;
- (1) offer to school personnel as professional development a mental health wellness program or training on first aid; and (2) authorize school personnel to participate in the professional development during school hours, earn additional compensation for participation, or receive continuing education credits for participation;
- establish on the school's website an easily accessible webpage that includes resources for a mental health wellness program or training first aid; and
- offer to the community an educational assembly on mental health wellness and resources.

**Current Law:** With the assistance of the LHD, each local board of education must provide adequate school health services, instruction in health education, and a healthful school environment. MSDE and the Maryland Health Department must jointly develop public standards and guidelines for school health programs and offer assistance to the local boards of education and LHDs in their implementation. Each local school system must designate a school health services program coordinator, but it may authorize the LHD to designate a coordinator.

Each local school system must (1) provide in public schools a comprehensive health education program with sufficient frequency and duration to meet the requirements of the State curriculum for all students in prekindergarten through grade 8 and (2) offer in public schools a comprehensive health education program in grades 9 through 12 that enables students to meet graduation requirements and to select health education electives. Access to the curriculum must be provided for nondiploma-bound students.

In order to graduate from public high school in Maryland, students must complete a credit of health.

New health education standards were adopted by the State Board of Education in December 2019; the [Maryland Comprehensive Health Education Framework](#) was revised and posted in July 2020. There are Family Life and Human Sexuality standards for prekindergarten through grade 8 and for two semesters of high school. MSDE advises that the current framework contains all the elements required by the bill.

State law requires local school systems to teach a number of specified health topics including drug addiction and prevention education; awareness and prevention of sexual abuse and assault; and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) that includes hands-only CPR and the use of an automated external defibrillator.

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### **Additional Information**

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 74 of 2024 and HB 593 of 2023.

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Association of County Health Officers; Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Health; Baltimore City Public Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools; Prince George’s County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 10, 2025  
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