

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 783 (Senator Carozza, *et al.*)
Education, Energy, and the Environment

Public Schools – Student Fights – School Investigation and Discipline

This bill requires a principal or school administration to investigate each student fight or physical struggle, and prohibits school employees from disciplining a student who, after the investigation, more likely than not used reasonable force to protect the student or to escape the attack. If a student is disciplined during the course of an investigation but is later determined to have used reasonable force, the principal or school administration must expunge any documentation of the discipline from the student’s disciplinary record. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill pertains only to local school systems.

Local Effect: Local school systems can update codes of conduct and investigate incidents as necessary with existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law:

Violence Prevention/Intervention by School Employee

A principal, teacher, school security guard, or other school system personnel in any public school may take reasonable action necessary to prevent violence on school premises or on a school-sponsored trip, including intervening in a fight or physical struggle that takes

place in his or her presence, whether the fight is among students or other individuals. The degree and force of the intervention may be as reasonably necessary to prevent violence, restore order, and protect the safety of the combatants and surrounding individuals. If the individual taking preventive action is hurt, (1) the county board must compensate the individual for any necessary medical expenses that are a direct result of the preventive action or intervention and (2) the individual may not lose any compensation for any time lost from school duties as a direct result of the individual's preventive action/intervention, subject to a potential reduction in compensation because of payments made under the Maryland Workers' Compensation Act.

In any suit, claim, or criminal charge brought by a parent or other claimant of one of the combatants against the preventer/intervening individual because of the preventive action or intervention, the county board (1) must provide legal counsel for the preventer/intervening individual or may provide reimbursement for the reasonable expenses of the legal defense of any criminal charge if the county board considers it appropriate and (2) must save the preventer/intervening individual harmless from any award or decree against the individual.

Discipline Guidelines

The State Board of Education must establish guidelines that define a State code of discipline for all public schools with standards of conduct and consequences for violations of the standards. The guidelines were last updated in 2014. The State board must also (1) upon request, provide technical assistance and training to local school boards on the use of restorative practices and (2) assist each local school board with implementing the guidelines. Each local school board must adopt regulations designed to create and maintain within schools the atmosphere of order and discipline necessary for effective learning. The local regulations must state that the primary purpose of any disciplinary measure is rehabilitative, restorative, and educational. They must also provide for educational and behavioral interventions, restorative approaches, counseling, student and parent conferencing, and alternative programs. On or before October 1 each year, the Maryland State Department of Education must submit a [report](#) to the Governor and General Assembly on student discipline data, including a description of the use of restorative approaches in the State and a review of disciplinary practices and policies in the State.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See SB 1032 and HB 1400 of 2024.

Designated Cross File: HB 1132 (Delegate Tomlinson, *et al.*) - Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Frederick County Public Schools; St. Mary's County Public Schools; Wicomico County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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