

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 923 (Senator Gile)
Education, Energy, and the Environment

Public Schools - High School Sports Officiating Services - Procurement Requirements

This bill requires local school systems to reject any bid or proposal that would result in different rates of pay or fees for officiating or assigning officials for similar boys' and girls' high school sports. It also requires local school systems to issue solicitations for similar boys' and girls' high school sports officiating services simultaneously. A local school system may require that bidders or offerors include both boys' and girls' officiating services in a response to a solicitation for officiating services. If separate solicitations are issued for boys' and girls' officiating services, they must have the same submission deadlines. Additionally, local school systems may require that prospective bidders or offerors partner to ensure that any bid or offer for boys' sports officiating services is accompanied by bids and offers for girls' sports officiating services. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill affects only local government operations.

Local Effect: Local school system expenditures increase to the extent they need to equalize pay for similar boys' and girls' high school sports officials. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: “Similar boys’ and girls’ high school sports” means high school sports that (1) occur in the same season, (2) have comparable rules, (3) have a similar number of high schools’ sports officials, and (4) have a similar time of competition. The Maryland State Department of Education may develop guidelines to assist local school systems with the implementation of the requirements of this bill, including additional criteria for determining which high school sports qualify as similar boys’ and girls’ high school sports.

The requirements of this bill cannot be interpreted to prohibit the payment of assigning fees as a bonus that is paid outside of a procurement contract. An “assignor” is an officiating association, organization, or independent contractor that (1) is registered in good standing with the State Department of Assessments and Taxation and (2) provides, assigns, and schedules the officials that provide the high school sports officiating services for a high school sporting event.

A local school system that executed a procurement contract for high school sports officiating services on or before the effective date of the bill may extend the term of the contract to align the contract timelines for similar boys’ and girls’ high school sports but cannot extend the contract beyond July 1, 2029. Apart from contracts that have been extended, the bill must be construed to apply only prospectively and cannot be applied or interpreted to have any effect on or application to any procurement contracts for high school sports officiating services entered into before the effective date of the bill.

Current Law: State regulations govern athletic programs for all high school students in Maryland public secondary schools, which are members of the Marland Public Secondary School Athletic Association (MPSSAA). Regulations include, among other things, defined sports seasons, maximum number of contests permitted during a sports season for each sport, and requirements for equal opportunity for participation in sports for both sexes. For sports officials, regulations requires that schools involved in interscholastic contests use only officials that are certified by MPSSAA. In situations where MPSSAA certified officials are not available, the school must use qualified officials.

Local Expenditures: Local school systems may incur additional costs to the extent that they are required to pay more for officiating services for high school girls’ sports to match the pay of officiating services for similar high school boys’ sports. Several local school systems, including Baltimore City and Baltimore, Montgomery, and Wicomico counties advise that the bill does not have a financial effect because they currently pay officials the same amount for similar boys’ and girls’ sports. However, two counties indicate that they do not currently pay the same rates for similar boys’ and girls’ sports. In Frederick County, a pay disparity exists only for two sports, which will cost the county approximately \$5,013 beginning in fiscal 2026 to equalize pay. Anne Arundel County advises that based on its

current contracts with officials, the county needs to increase pay for officials in girls' sports by \$20,700 beginning in fiscal 2026 to provide equal pay. Other counties that did not respond for this analysis may see similar cost increases as a result of the bill's requirements.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: HB 1483 (Delegate D. Jones, *et al.*) - Ways and Means and Health and Government Operations.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Department of General Services; Baltimore City Public Schools; Baltimore County Public Schools; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Frederick County Public Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools; Wicomico County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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