

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Enrolled - Revised

Senate Bill 923

(Senator Gile, *et al.*)

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Ways and Means and Health and
Government Operations

Public Schools - High School Sports Officials - Payment and Fees

This bill requires local boards of education to ensure that high school sports officials receive the same pay if the officials are providing officiating services for sports categorized as similar high school sports. A local board must reject any bid or proposal that would result in different rates of pay or fees for officiating similar high school sports. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must develop a list of similar high school sports for boys and girls by September 1, 2025, and update the list every three years. The bill requires officials to earn the same pay only within a local school system and cannot be construed to (1) require parity in officials' pay between counties; (2) have any effect on the grouping of sports together for any purpose other than payment of sports officials or fees; or (3) prohibit fees outside of a procurement contract as a bonus to officials. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill's requirements can be handled with existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

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: “High school sports official” means an official, umpire, referee, or judge who presides over a sporting event to guarantee the rules of the event are enforced. The bill applies to a high school sports official who is an employee of the local school system or is employed by an independent contractor or officiating association or organization with which the local board of education contracts.

In categorizing boys’ and girls’ sports as similar, MSDE must consider whether each sport (1) occurs in the same season; (2) has comparable rules; (3) requires a similar number of high school sports officials; (4) requires similar high school sports officiating services; and (5) features competition of comparable lengths of time.

Current Law: State regulations govern athletic programs for all high school students in Maryland public secondary schools, which are members of the Maryland 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 require 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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