

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 136
Budget and Taxation

(Senator Folden)

Education - Safe Schools Fund - Grant Allocations

This bill authorizes the School Safety Subcabinet to reallocate funds in the Safe Schools Fund to local school systems that have spent their allocation and demonstrate need within the same fiscal year. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: No net effect on special fund revenues or expenditures as the bill only authorizes the reallocation of existing funding for local school systems and/or law enforcement agencies. The Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) can implement the bill with existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: Potential significant increase in revenues for school safety-related purposes for some local school systems and/or law enforcement agencies, but any such increase is contingent on the availability of unspent funds and is at the discretion of the School Safety Subcabinet. No effect on local expenditures.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law:

School Safety Subcabinet

The School Safety Subcabinet consists of the following individuals or their designees:

- the State Superintendent of Schools;
- the Secretary of Health;
- the Secretary of State Police;
- the Attorney General;
- the Secretary of the Department of Disabilities; and
- the Executive Director of the Interagency Commission on School Construction.

The State Superintendent or designee chairs the subcabinet, and the Executive Director of MCSS provides staff.

Safe Schools Fund

The Safe Schools Fund is administered by the subcabinet, which must establish procedures for local school systems and law enforcement agencies to apply for grants from the fund (MCSS administers the grant program under the direction of the subcabinet). The purpose of the fund is to provide grants to local school systems to enhance school safety, and it may be used only for that purpose, as specified.

Each year, the Governor must include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$10 million to the fund for grants to local school systems and law enforcement agencies to assist in providing adequate law enforcement coverage for public schools. This includes offsetting the cost of assigning School Resources Officers (SROs) to public schools. Chapter 179 of 2024 further authorized the use of grant funds to offset the cost of assigning school security employees to public schools. Grants must be made to each local school system in proportion to their share of public schools in the State. Any unspent funds revert to the fund each year but cannot be reallocated.

Local Revenues: Grant funds for adequate law enforcement coverage of schools (including for SROs) generally do not cover the full cost of providing that coverage, which is borne by local school systems and/or law enforcement agencies. However, some local school systems/law enforcement agencies do not spend their allocation of grant funds. In fiscal 2023, \$6.2 million of the \$10 million allocation remained unspent, and in fiscal 2024, \$3.7 million was unspent. Due to the statutory requirement that funds be distributed based on the number of schools in each school system, unspent funds cannot be reallocated. Under the bill, some local school systems and/or law enforcement agencies that exhaust their grant allocations may receive additional funds to cover their costs of providing adequate law enforcement coverage but only at the discretion of the School Safety Subcabinet. Therefore, local revenues may increase, but a reliable estimate of total revenues or revenues per county cannot be made.

MCSS advises, however, that there may be fewer unspent funds in the future due to the addition of school security employees as authorized uses for the grant funds. According to MCSS, more school systems may spend their full allocation now that they can use those funds for school security employees. Further, MCSS advises that current grant guidelines give school systems the full year to spend their funds; MCSS must alter its guidelines in order to be able to reallocate unspent funds within the same fiscal year, as authorized by the bill.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: HB 157 (Delegate Griffith) - Appropriations.

Information Source(s): Maryland Center for School Safety; Department of Budget and Management; Baltimore City Public Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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km/clb

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