

Department of Legislative Services  
 Maryland General Assembly  
 2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
 First Reader

House Bill 781 (Delegate Conaway)  
 Ways and Means and Judiciary

Public Middle Schools – Instruction on the Consequences of a Conviction for  
 Felony Murder

This bill requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to develop age-appropriate curriculum resources on the consequences of a conviction for felony murder for students in grades 6 through 8 in public schools and to determine the appropriate subject area in which the instruction must be incorporated. Beginning in the 2027-2028 school year, each local board of education must incorporate the instruction based on the curriculum resources developed by SBE and ensure that each student receives the instruction at least once during grades 6 through 8. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** General fund expenditures increase by \$250,000 only in FY 2027 for contractual services to research, develop, and publish age-appropriate curriculum resources required by the bill. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	250,000	0	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$250,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

*Note: ( ) = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease*

**Local Effect:** Local school system expenditures may increase in FY 2027 for curriculum alignment and preparation. Beginning in FY 2028 (the 2027-2028 school year), expenditures increase to implement the required instruction in some school systems, but costs are expected to be absorbable within existing resources for most local school systems. Revenues are not affected.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

## Analysis

**Bill Summary:** “Consequences of a conviction for felony murder” is defined as the legal penalties that take away an individual’s freedom, rights, and access to programs or services after a conviction for murder in the first degree under Title 2 of the Criminal Law Article.

SBE may adopt regulations to implement the bill.

**Current Law:** With the advice of the State Superintendent of Schools, SBE establishes basic policy and guidelines for the program of instruction for public schools. Subject to State law and the regulations, bylaws, policies, and guidelines established by SBE, each local board of education must establish the curriculum guides and courses of study for schools in its jurisdiction. Policies, rules, and regulations for the graduation of students from Maryland public schools are established by local boards of education and SBE.

MSDE advises that at the middle school level the [State Standards and Frameworks in Social Studies](#) do not include the content required by the bill; however, opportunities to learn about criminal law and the criminal justice system are directly addressed in [High School United States History](#) and [American Government](#).

**State Expenditures:** The bill requires SBE to develop age-appropriate curriculum resources for instruction on the consequences of a conviction for felony murder for students in grades 6 through 8. As SBE is generally responsible for developing curriculum standards and guidelines, developing curriculum *resources* (e.g., curriculum guides and instructional materials) is beyond its normal expertise.

As a result, MSDE advises that development of these curriculum resources, including research, drafting instructional materials, and determining the appropriate subject area for incorporation, necessitates hiring a consultant team at an estimated one-time cost of \$250,000 in fiscal 2027. However, to the extent existing instructional materials or related curriculum resources can be adapted, or internal staff capacity can be utilized, the total cost may be less. Further, the scope of work may be less than that imagined by MSDE.

No additional consultant costs are anticipated in future years; however, MSDE may incur ongoing operational responsibilities associated with providing technical assistance and implementation support to local school systems. These ongoing responsibilities are assumed to be handled with existing resources. Actual costs may vary depending on the scope of the curriculum materials developed and the extent to which internal staff resources are leveraged.

**Local Expenditures:** Beginning in the 2027-2028 school year, each local board must develop and incorporate instruction based on the curriculum resources developed by the

SBE. Accordingly, local school system expenditures may increase in fiscal 2027 and 2028 to review and integrate the State-developed curriculum resources, revise lesson plans, provide teacher professional development, update instructional materials, and establish processes to track student participation.

Several local school systems anticipate modest one-time curriculum development costs. Reported estimates range from approximately \$500 (Wicomico County) to \$22,500 (Prince George’s County) for curriculum alignment and instructional planning. Anne Arundel County and St. Mary’s County similarly anticipate additional expenditures for curriculum development and teacher professional development. By contrast, Frederick County and Montgomery County estimate minimal costs, assuming the required instruction can be incorporated into existing courses and professional development cycles.

Beginning in fiscal 2028, local school systems incur costs associated with implementing the required instruction and monitoring student completion; however, ongoing costs are expected to be limited to the extent instruction is embedded within existing coursework and no additional staffing is required. Actual costs depend on the scope of the curriculum resources developed by SBE. Costs are expected to be absorbable within existing resources for most local school systems.

**Additional Comments:** In December 2021, the Department of Legislative Services produced a report entitled “[\*Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Conviction\*](#)”.

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### **Additional Information**

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 993 of 2025 and HB 880 of 2023.

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education; Baltimore City Public Schools; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools; Prince George’s County Public Schools; Frederick County Public Schools; Wicomico County Public Schools; St. Mary’s County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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