

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1202 (Delegate Acevero, *et al.*)
 Ways and Means

Public Schools – Content Standards, Curriculum, and Bullying Policies – Culture and History of Palestine

This bill requires the State Board of Education (SBE), by December 1, 2026, to develop content standards on the culture and history of Palestine for inclusion in the State social studies standards and frameworks. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in collaboration with specified stakeholders, must develop aligned model curriculum guides, instructional resources, and optional professional development resources. Each local board must develop and implement age- and developmentally appropriate curriculum aligned with the standards, and beginning in the 2027-2028 school year, each public school must include Palestinian culture and history in the social studies curriculum. The bill specifies that the instruction may not require political advocacy, limit discussion of multiple historical perspectives, supersede existing standards absent irreconcilable conflict, or infringe on constitutional rights. MSDE must determine appropriate placement of the instruction and report to the General Assembly by December 1, 2027. Further, the SBE model policy prohibiting bullying, harassment, or intimidation in schools must include a definition that expressly includes anti-Palestinian bias. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$250,000 in FY 2027 to develop required content standards and produce model curriculum guides and instructional resources. 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 beginning in FY 2027 for curriculum alignment and beginning in FY 2028 for implementation of required instruction and related policy updates. The magnitude of expenditures varies by jurisdiction and may be meaningful for some local school systems. Revenues are not affected. **This bill may impose a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The General Assembly finds that the purpose of the standards is to address anti-Palestinian hate and discrimination through education; ensure accurate, balanced, and historically grounded instruction; promote student safety, inclusion, and dignity; and strengthen existing diversity, equity, inclusion, and antidiscrimination frameworks in public schools.

The required content standards must include instruction on the historical presence of Palestinians in the region; Palestinian cultural, religious, linguistic, and social traditions; the impact of displacement, statelessness, and conflict; distinctions between governments, political movements, and civilian populations; principles of international human rights; and recognition of Palestinian identity as a distinct ethnic and cultural identity.

The content standards must be factual, historically grounded, and nonpartisan; emphasize critical thinking, media literacy, and respectful dialogue; avoid political advocacy or endorsement of any particular government or political movement; and respect academic freedom and constitutional protections afforded to teachers and students.

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.

Bullying, Harassment, and Intimidation Policies

Chapter 489 of 2008 required SBE to develop a model policy that prohibits bullying, harassment, and intimidation in schools, which must be updated every five years. Using the model policy, local boards of education were required to develop policies for the public schools under their jurisdiction. A public school employee who reports an act of bullying, harassment, or intimidation in accordance with the local board of education's policy is not

civily liable for any act or omission in reporting or failing to report an act of bullying, harassment, or intimidation.

“Bullying, harassment, or intimidation” is intentional conduct, including verbal, physical, or written conduct, or an intentional electronic communication that:

- creates a hostile educational environment by substantially interfering with a student’s educational benefits, opportunities, or performance, or with a student’s physical or psychological well-being, and is:
 - motivated by an actual or a perceived personal characteristic including race, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, ancestry, physical attributes, socioeconomic status, familial status, or physical or mental ability or disability;
 - sexual in nature, as specified; or
 - threatening or seriously intimidating; and
- occurs on school property, at a school activity or event, or on a school bus; or substantially disrupts the orderly operation of a school.

MSDE must require local boards to report incidents of bullying, harassment, or intimidation, and must create a standard victim report form that includes specified information about the victim, alleged perpetrator, incident details, injuries, absences, and requests for psychological services. Local boards must distribute the form, may establish an anonymous two-way electronic tip program, and, if established, must publicize and process reports in accordance with statutory requirements.

Local boards must submit annual summaries of reported incidents to the SBE, with identifying information removed. Report information is confidential and may not be included in a student’s permanent educational record. MSDE must submit an annual report to the General Assembly summarizing reported incidents, including descriptions of the conduct, ages of involved students, alleged motives, investigative actions taken, absences resulting from incidents, and the number of false allegations reported.

To ensure the policies are effective, each local board must develop an educational bullying prevention program for students, staff, volunteers, and parents, as well as a professional development program to train teachers and administrators on how to implement the policy. To encourage compliance, any school employee who reports an act of bullying in accordance with their local board's policy is immune from civil liability for reporting.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures increase by approximately \$250,000 in fiscal 2027 for MSDE to contract with an external vendor to convene and staff a stakeholder workgroup (teachers historians, civil rights organizations, and community groups), conduct research, develop required content standards, and produce model

curriculum guides and instructional resources (and optional professional development materials) in accordance with the bill's December 1, 2026 deadline and the July 1, 2026 effective date of the bill. MSDE advises that an external contractor is necessary to provide content area expertise and complete the required scope of work within the required five-month timeframe.

In addition, MSDE estimates total costs of approximately \$120,000 through fiscal 2031 to vet instructional resources through the State's High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) review process, at an estimated cost of \$12,000 per review for 10 reviews conducted over five years. MSDE advises that the addition of new content standards may affect prior standards-alignment findings and, therefore, necessitate re-review to maintain the integrity of existing alignment reports. However, the Department of Legislative Services advises that the bill does not require instructional materials to be submitted to or approved through the HQIM review process. Accordingly, any costs associated with conducting HQIM reviews reflect implementation choices rather than an express requirement of the bill, and such costs are not assumed in this analysis.

The required review of social studies standards, revision of the model bullying policy, and report to the General Assembly by December 1, 2027, are assumed to be handled with existing resources.

Local Expenditures: Local school system expenditures may increase beginning in fiscal 2027 to develop and implement age- and developmentally appropriate curriculum guides aligned with the State content standards on the culture and history of Palestine. Local school systems may also incur costs to revise bullying, harassment, or intimidation policies to align with updates to the State model policy addressing anti-Palestinian bias.

Although the bill requires MSDE to develop State content standards, model curriculum guides, instructional resources, and optional professional development resources, each local board of education is responsible for developing and implementing aligned local curriculum guides. Local costs may be mitigated to the extent that local school systems adopt or adapt MSDE-developed materials rather than independently developing new materials.

Local school systems indicate that potential expenditures may include compensated teacher time for curriculum development and review, professional development for social studies educators, and contracted services for subject-matter expertise. For example, Prince George's County Public Schools estimates first-year expenditures of approximately \$173,000 and ongoing annual expenditures of approximately \$161,000 thereafter, primarily for professional development and contracted services. St. Mary's County Public Schools estimates expenditures of approximately \$25,000 in fiscal 2027 and 2028 and approximately \$4,000 annually thereafter for compensated teacher committee work and

professional learning. In contrast, Frederick County Public Schools anticipates that implementation can be absorbed within existing resources and reports no fiscal impact. Baltimore City Public Schools advises that costs depend on implementation decisions.

The magnitude of local expenditures varies by jurisdiction depending on local implementation decisions, the extent to which existing social studies frameworks can be modified, the scope of professional development provided, and whether external expertise is procured. Overall, local expenditures may be meaningful for some local school systems but are not uniform statewide.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

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

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