

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

House Bill 326

(Delegate Ebersole)

Ways and Means

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Education - Maryland Center for School Safety - Anonymous Reporting System

This bill requires the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) to develop and administer an anonymous reporting system that (1) coordinates the receipt of information relating to a school or student safety concern in a manner that maintains confidentiality and (2) provides a mechanism for any reported information to be forwarded to school or other appropriate officials. A custodian of public records under the Maryland Public Information Act (PIA) must deny inspection of any information or materials related to the anonymous reporting system. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill codifies existing practice.

Local Effect: None. Local school systems already comply with the bill’s requirements.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: MCSS must develop operational guidelines and procedures for the anonymous reporting system and provide training sessions for school personnel on navigating the system. In general, each local school system must participate in the system by July 1, 2027; however, a local school system may opt out only if it operates and makes available to the public a substantially similar system. A local school system that opts out of the system must provide written notice to MCSS by December 1, 2026.

Current Law:

Maryland Center for School Safety

Chapter 372 of 2013 established MCSS as an independent unit within State government under the direction of a governing board chaired by the State Superintendent of Schools. Five years later, the Maryland Safe to Learn Act made MCSS an independent unit *within* the Maryland State Department of Education and increased the mandated appropriation for MCSS's operations from \$500,000 to \$2.0 million annually. MCSS's duties include:

- assisting local school systems to identify resources and implement training for students and parents about relationship violence, identifying the signs of unhealthy relationships, and preventing relationship violence;
- analyzing data on School Resource Officers (SROs) and developing guidelines for local school systems regarding the assignment and training of SROs;
- certifying school safety coordinators;
- consulting with local school systems on safety evaluations;
- reviewing and commenting on school emergency plans; and
- reporting on life-threatening incidents that occur on public school grounds.

MCSS operates [Safe Schools Maryland](#), an anonymous and free reporting system available to students, teachers, school staff members, parents, and the general public to report any school or student safety concerns, including mental health concerns.

Maryland Public Information Act

PIA establishes that all persons are entitled to have access to information about the affairs of government and the official acts of public officials and employees. Each governmental unit that maintains public records must identify a representative whom a member of the public may contact to request a public record. The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) must post all such contact information on its website and in any *Public Information Act Manual* published by OAG.

Duties of Custodians

Generally, a custodian of a public record must permit inspection of any public record at any reasonable time. A custodian must designate types of public records that are to be made available to any applicant immediately on request and maintain a current list of the types of public records that have been so designated. Each custodian must adopt reasonable rules or regulations that, consistent with PIA, govern timely production and inspection of a public record. Chapter 658 of 2021, effective July 1, 2022, requires each official custodian

to adopt a policy of proactive disclosure of public records that are available for inspection under PIA, as specified.

Required Denials

A custodian must deny inspection of a public record or any part of a public record if (1) the public record is privileged or confidential by law, or (2) the inspection would be contrary to a State statute, a federal statute or regulation, the Maryland Rules, or an order of a court of record. PIA also requires denial of inspection for specified personal and confidential records and information, including, for example, personnel and student records, hospital records, specified medical and financial information, and shielded criminal and police records. Chapter 62 of 2021 specifies that a record relating to an administrative or criminal investigation of misconduct by a police officer is not a protected personnel record under PIA and requires a custodian to allow access to such records by federal and State prosecutors. Chapters 548 and 549 of 2024 further specify that a record of positive community feedback that was not solicited by the police officer who is the subject of the feedback is not a protected personnel record under PIA.

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; Maryland Center for School Safety; Baltimore City Public Schools; Anne Arundel 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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