



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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SB 258

DATE: February 4, 2020

SPONSOR: Senator Bailey, et al.

ASSIGNED TO: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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POSITION: Support With Amendments

Public Schools – Electric Retractable Room Partitions – Operation Requirements

Senate Bill 258 prohibits a school employee from operating an electric retractable room partition under specified circumstances. Annual safety reviews, evaluations, or exercises must include information and demonstrations regarding the safe operation of an electric retractable room partition. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must develop and disseminate model safety guidelines to each local school board.

There have been several child fatalities in the last few decades, with one occurring in Fairfax County last year. In 2019, Virginia enacted a similar law prohibiting operation of electronic room partitions in public schools unless: (1) no student is present in the building; (2) no student is present in the room where the partition is located and the room is locked and inaccessible to students; or (3) the partition includes a safety sensor that automatically stops the partition if a person crosses the plane between the partitioned rooms. New York state enacted a similar law in 2001 but included all nonpublic schools and educational institutions as well.

Montgomery County supports SB 258 with the following amendments: (1) include all nonpublic schools; (2) require MSDE to post the model guidelines to its website; and (3) authorize the local governing body of a county to enact a local law prohibiting school employees from operating the partitions under the circumstances outlined in the bill.