



Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

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| BILL: | Senate Bill 966 | DATE: | March 30, 2021 |
| SUBJECT: | Virtual Schools - Statewide Education Platform - Procurement and Establishment | COMMITTEE: | Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs |
| POSITION: | Information Only | | |
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EXPLANATION:

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is providing information for consideration regarding **Senate Bill (SB) 966, Virtual Schools - Statewide Education Platform - Procurement and Establishment**. MSDE is dedicated to supporting the expansion of high-quality virtual and hybrid programs that prepare students for college and careers. SB 966 supports this goal with certain timelines that are unattainable.

SB 966 authorizes MSDE to make a procurement on an expedited basis for a statewide platform. During the March 10, 2021 Board of Public Works meeting, a new robust learning management system platform (LMS) was approved for the state. This LMS platform is being used to house all MSDE online student and educator statewide courses as well as to support local school systems (LSSs) as they expand their virtual blended learning efforts. For over five years, there has been a process in place for each LSS to submit proposals for the development of blended virtual programs/schools and virtual programs/schools. (The forms are attached.)

SB 966 does not provide funding; however, implementation of the legislation will require a team that includes two additional education specialists to provide training, oversight of the LSS Local School allotted areas in the LMS platform, conduct required evaluations, create reports, and manage grant awards. The team will also include a LMS system administrator for virtual schools to maintain functionality of the system, assist with technical issues, enroll participants, and serve as the point of contact to the assigned LSS staff.

The July 2021 time constraint in SB966 will not provide adequate time to onboard the new LMS, hire staff, develop professional learning opportunities, and effectively integrate all LSS virtual blended program requests. Throughout the spring of 2021, MSDE will be engaged in migrating all existing courses to the new LMS and ensuring functionality.

We respectfully request that you consider this information as you deliberate **SB 966**. For further information, please contact Zachary Hands, at 410-767-0504, or Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov.