



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis R. Schwader, Acting Secretary

February 12, 2021

The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser
Chair, House Ways and Means Committee
Room 131, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: House Bill (HB) 771 - Public Schools - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Surveys - Revisions - Letter of Information

Dear Chair Kaiser and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) is submitting this letter of information for House Bill 771 (HB 771) titled: "Public Schools - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Surveys - Revisions."

HB 771 seeks to assign responsibility for determining administration procedures for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Youth Tobacco Survey (YTS) to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The bill would also remove MSDE's authority to omit certain questions from both the CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) and YTS and require that additional questions on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and positive childhood experiences (PCEs) from CDC be included in the combined YRBS/YTS. Finally, HB 771 would require MDH to submit an additional report on ACEs at the state and county level six months after receiving data from CDC.

Although HB 771 would assign responsibility for determining administration procedures for the YTS to MSDE, MDH would remain responsible for funding, implementation, and data analysis. Currently, CDC will only cover associated costs of analyzing, scanning, and cleaning data for surveys that contain up to 99 questions. This bill's requirement to include all tiers and questions from CDC on ACEs and PCEs (16 additional questions) would push Maryland surveys over the 99-question limit. MDH would then bear the cost of purchasing survey response sheets and contracting with an agency to scan, digitize, and deliver data sheets to CDC (84,000 in the last survey cycle) in the required formats. HB 771 would have a fiscal impact on MDH of approximately \$25,000 per administration of the YRBS/YTS survey.

Additionally, CDC best practice recommendations state that limiting the number of survey questions to no more than 99 is ideal for high school students to ensure that the survey can be completed in one classroom period (45 minutes). To account for this and to reduce the burden on students and classrooms, MDH and MSDE worked to combine the two surveys into one (YRBS/YTS).

On top of associated costs and burden to students, the addition of required questions and negated ability of MSDE to omit certain questions would prevent the inclusion of questions on timely/alternative topics, such as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on risk behaviors and health. The majority of questions on the YRBS/YTS are derived from statutorily required questions on tobacco use behaviors that determine funding for local jurisdictions. Following statutorily required tobacco questions, MDH works internally with MSDE and various stakeholders to determine additional questions and round out the remainder of the survey. There is typically space for 8-10 stakeholder questions, however MDH routinely receives more than 8-10 requests. In the past, MDH has worked with stakeholders to include as many questions as possible while offering rotating additional questions in future surveys. The question requirements included in HB 771 would fill all question allotments typically reserved for stakeholder input.

I hope this information is useful. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Assistant Secretary for Health Policy Webster Ye at (410) 260-3190 or webster.ye@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Webster Ye".

Webster Ye
Assistant Secretary