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HOUSE BILL 738 Public Schools – Appropriations for School Safety Expenditures – Increase (School Safety Enhancement Act of 2023)

STATEMENT OF INFORMATION

DATE: March 16, 2023

COMMITTEE: House Appropriations

SUMMARY OF BILL: HB 738 increases the general fund mandate for the Safe Schools Fund from \$10 million to \$20 million in FY 2025 and increases the amount that must be budgeted for grants to local school systems from the Safe Schools Fund accordingly.

EXPLANATION: The Safe Schools Fund currently receives \$10 million in mandated general funds each year for grants to local school systems to provide school resource officer (SRO) or local law enforcement (LLE) coverage. This bill would double that amount to \$20 million beginning in FY 2025.

This legislation would be an addition to ongoing enhancements for education and student support services. Funding in the State budget for K-12 education is at record levels in FY 2024, at approximately \$8.8 billion. Existing funding can already be utilized to enhance efforts to boost school security and safety at the local level. The FY 2024 budget also includes record funding targeted at safety in public schools. On top of the \$10 million in existing mandated funding for the Safe Schools Fund, the Governor's FY 2024 budget includes \$10 million for security improvements to public schools, \$3 million to support schools and childcare centers at risk of hate crimes and bias incidents, and \$3 million to help local school systems conduct safety evaluations. The safety evaluations are supported by surplus funding in the Safe Schools Fund.

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) is charged with submitting a balanced budget to the General Assembly annually and strives to create a structurally balanced budget, in which the growth in spending is less than the growth in revenues. In light of current economic uncertainty and the potential for a downturn, the Department urges caution in passing legislation significantly expanding State required expenditures without offsetting revenues. General fund mandates can have the effect of crowding out the State's ability to fund staffing, salary adjustments, and in general invest strategically and holistically in State government's human capital and the infrastructure required to carry out State government's mission. State government must be intentional, disciplined, and strategic with its allocation of State funding to ensure maximum impact toward priority outcomes.

General Fund Structural Budget Outlook, Fiscal 2024 – 2028 (\$ millions)

	Est. 2024	Est. 20235	Est. 2026	Est. 2027	Est. 2028
Structural Balance	\$337	\$232	\$263	\$529	\$1,113
Adjusted for Blueprint				-\$963	-\$1,207

Department of Legislative Services, January 2023 Fiscal Briefing

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