

<b>Bill:</b>	Senate Bill 677	<b>Date:</b>	February 24, 2023
<b>Title:</b>	Maryland Center for School Safety – Statewide Secure Schools Emergency Response Program – Established	<b>Committee:</b>	Education, Energy, and the Environment
<b>Position:</b>	Support with Amendments	<b>Contact:</b>	Kim Buckheit <a href="mailto:kimberly.buckheit1@maryland.gov">kimberly.buckheit1@maryland.gov</a> 443-902-0622

On behalf of the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS), thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter of support with amendments to Senate Bill 677.

MCSS recognizes the intent of the bill is to have a panic system in all Maryland schools that is integrated with emergency services in a way that produces the most efficient and effective response to a school emergency. However, the effort required to implement a statewide system is complex both technologically and procedurally and the timing provided in the bill to implement such a system is not feasible.

Effective implementation of such a critical system will require a thorough assessment of existing systems, equipment, and procedures across the twenty-four local education agencies, their public safety answering points, public safety agencies, and--as written in the bill--may require considerations for some level of implementation in private schools. As such, MCSS recommends that the legislature *instead* convene a workgroup of local and State education and public safety partners to develop recommendations for how the State could ensure that every public school has the capability to facilitate direct communication between a school and public safety answering point or agency during a life-threatening emergency.

To be effective, such a system must (1) recognize the differences across each local emergency services organization and (2) integrate across the varied systems and protocols currently in place to accept, process, and dispatch emergency services. It is important to note that several local jurisdictions have *already invested* considerable resources into implementing this solution, which would necessitate additional considerations if the State attempts to implement one singular solution.

Finally and most importantly, a September 2023 implementation timeline is not feasible. In addition to the complexities mentioned above, the identification and procurement of a single system, followed by a statewide implementation, establishment of policies and procedures, and the administration of training across all 1400+ public schools and 1000+ private schools will go well beyond the three months (June to September 2023) provided in the bill. Once overarching goals are

identified, large procurements in Maryland typically take 12-18 months<sup>1</sup> to allow agencies to identify requirements; finalize a request for proposal; publish a request for proposal; review submitted proposals; conduct demos; ensure cybersecurity safeguards and certifications; review financials; select vendors; submit to BPW for approval; and sign the contract. Implementation, which will include many additional steps, can not begin until a contract is signed.

Although the timeline in the bill is concerning, MCSS believes it would be feasible by September 2023 to have convened a workgroup to identify the goals, objectives, and intended outcomes of a statewide integrated panic alert system. MCSS would welcome the opportunity to serve as the coordinating agency for such an important initiative.

For these reasons, MCSS respectfully requests that the committee give Senate Bill 677 a favorable with amendments report.

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<sup>1</sup> State of Maryland Procurement Manual, 37, (December 2022), <https://procurement.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2022/12/Maryland-Procurement-Manual-v3-December-2022.pdf>.