



# THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

**BILL:** Senate Bill 810 – Maryland Priority Out-of-School Time Program – Alterations

**SPONSOR:** Senator A. Washington

**HEARING DATE:** March 16, 2023

**COMMITTEE:** Finance

**CONTACT:** Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

---

---

**POSITION:** SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

---

---

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS with Sponsor's Amendments Senate Bill 810**, which transfers the Public School Opportunities Enhancement Program from the State Department of Education to the Governor's Office and renaming the Program to be the Maryland Priority Out-of-School Time Program. This program provides educational and recreational enrichment programs for children ages 4 to 19. This bill also beginning in fiscal year 2024, alters the mandated appropriation to the Program to \$8,500,000 for each fiscal year.

The Maryland Out of School Time (MOST) Network's is a statewide youth development organization, dedicated to more and better opportunities in the out of school hours for all of Maryland's young people. They are leading voice for ensuring best practices in out-of-school programming with their widely accepted MOST Program Quality Standards. Stakeholders have placed so much confidence in these standards that the Maryland State Department of Education has used them to evaluate extended day and summer enhancement programming from nonprofits. The standards address a range of factors, including program design and accountability, the health and safety of participants, competent and professional staff, the program's environment being respectful and nurturing, and building partnerships with families and the community.

The MOST Network's main goal is to increase both the quantity and quality of after-school-hour programs in the state, and to ensure that access to them is equitable so that all Maryland youth have the same opportunities to reach their full potential. The MOST programs are believed to offer youth development resources where the children can obtain skills and qualities that will allow them to excel inside and outside of a traditional learning environment.

These programs are targeted to support students after school. These State supported programs aid a vital group of children that would otherwise be unsupervised afterschool. Children's access to enrichment activities is highly dependent on family income, having these programs aids low-income students who often trail substantially behind more-affluent peers, in terms of academic achievement and wraparound service availability. Reducing the time after school, the children are unsupervised, reduces their risk to engage in dangerous or illegal behaviors.

Students who participate in out-of-school-time learning programs often have a better knowledge retention rate, are more likely to excel in the classroom, and, according to studies, often have a more positive outlook on their own future compared to children who didn't participate. The problem we face is that funding and program availability is often lacking to keep up with demand. More funding for these programs directly impacts low-income students' ability to succeed.

Maryland still faces significant shortfalls in providing needed out-of-school programming to our students. The demand for afterschool programs in Maryland far surpasses the availability to the point that it leaves out roughly 390,000 children. That means for every one child in afterschool programing, there are three waiting to get in. Of the children unable to attend such programming, nearly 147,000 are unsupervised afterschool. And this is likely to only increase as over the past 10 years, as the number of children excluded from afterschool programming because of our inability to meet the demand has increased by nearly 93,000 children.

And this is not a controversial issue, according to a 2023 report just released in January, 80% of residents say afterschool programs are necessary community resources. And we know they are a tool to decrease juvenile criminal activity. Over the last few years, we have seen the rates of juvenile committing criminal activity increase and the age at which they begin this activity get younger. Last year, our County implemented a youth curfew in an effort to reduce instances of criminal activity among minors, and it was successful. But it only addresses a part of the problem we face. We need comprehensive solutions to crime reduction, which includes more than just enforcement or punishment, but investment. Providing resources to our youth is a vital tool in ensuring our youth don't get left behind. Afterschool programs are key to that goal.

However, 53% of afterschool programs report having an active waitlist – these are children that are waiting for resources, waiting for support, and waiting for our help. Funding for these programs helps us close the gaps and reach our youth, so they can reach their potential.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 810** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.