



BILL: House Bill 1336 / Senate Bill 1077
TITLE: Public Schools – Appropriations for School Safety Expenditures – School Security Employees
HEARING DATE: February 27, 2024 / February 28, 2024
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: House Appropriations / Senate Budget and Taxation
CONTACT: Mr. Steve Edwards, Deputy Communications Officer (301-766-8914)

The Washington County Board of Education supports House Bill 1336 as it aligns with the Board’s 2024 legislative priority of encouraging the state to allocate additional funding for school security employees and school resource officers to help achieve the goal of providing a safe and secure learning environment for students and staff.

Washington County Public Schools enjoys a strong partnership with our local law enforcement agencies who provide school resource officers for our campuses. However, unlike most boards of education, Washington County Board of Education is responsible for the full cost (i.e., salary and benefits) for these school resources officers and reimburses Washington County Government and the City of Hagerstown the costs of the officers from its maintenance of effort funding which is intended to cover instructional expenses. The cost to the Board of Education under the contracts with the respective agencies has increased from \$849,607 in Fiscal Year 2022 to over \$1.2 million in Fiscal Year 2023. The Board of Education anticipates a total cost of over \$1.5 million being paid to Washington County Government and the City of Hagerstown for school resource officers in Fiscal Year 2024, an increase of more than \$250,000 from the previous fiscal year.

However, because school safety and security is a priority for the Board of Education, this year it made an investment of just over \$800,000, in addition to the \$1.5 million paid for school resources officers, to hire 19 school safety and security assistants to further enhance school safety at each secondary school in Hagerstown and Williamsport. The return on this investment is clearly evident. These new safety and security assistants have made our schools safer, been proactive in addressing safety concerns, assisted in responding to concerning student behaviors, and helped grow a positive school culture. They each have developed a positive rapport with their respective school communities and most importantly, the students they serve each day. Their important work was best characterized by one of our high school principals whose school has benefited greatly from the addition of our school safety and security assistants. He said, quote, “We’re not policing students, we’re supporting students.”

The additional funding provided under House Bill 1336 will be important in helping to enhance safety efforts at schools across Maryland. Just as, if not more important, is the flexibility this bill will offer by allowing LEAs to utilize resources provided through the School Safety Fund to support school security employees, not just school resource officers as it currently does and from which Washington County Public Schools benefits from through the receipt of a grant of \$324,000 to provide adequate police coverage in our schools. Both school security employees and school resource officers are important components of achieving the goal of providing a safe and secure learning environment for students and staff.

The Washington County Board of Education respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 1336.

Thank you.

Cc: Washington County Board of Education Members
Washington County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly
Dr. David T. Sovine, Superintendent
Dr. Jennifer Webster, Associate Superintendent for Administration and Leadership
Dr. Garry Willow, Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Mr. Jeffrey Proulx, Chief Operating Officer
Ms. Ilissa Ramm, Chief Legal Counsel
Mr. Steve Ganley, Safety and Security Coordinator
Mr. John Woolums, Director of Governmental Relations, Maryland Association of Boards of Education
Ms. Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland