

BILL: SB1077
TITLE: Public Schools - Appropriations for School Safety Expenditures - School Security Employees
DATE: February 23, 2024
POSITION: Support with Amendments
COMMITTEE: Senate Budget and Taxation
CONTACT: Derek L. Simmons, Ed.D.

Caroline County Public Schools and the Caroline County Board of Education **supports Senate Bill 1077 with amendments.**

As stated in the fiscal note, this bill increases the annual mandated appropriation to the School Safety Fund which will provide grants to local school systems or law enforcement agencies. This funding will assist in providing adequate law enforcement coverage for public schools, from \$10 million to \$15 million in FY26 and to \$20 million in FY27 and each year thereafter.

The funding provided under this program is vital for school systems, not only to maintain a safe school community but also to strengthen safety efforts. Our school system has been able to utilize these funds to provide School Resource Officer coverage during the school day, as well as trainings and other safety measures. It also enables us to provide adequate law enforcement coverage for school/community events that occur outside of the school day, such as athletic events, dances, and commencement ceremonies.

The proposed increase in funding will allow our school system to maintain the level of coverage that our students, staff, and community have come to depend on while the costs to provide such has increased. Additionally, the increased funding provides opportunities to enhance our safety efforts in an ever-evolving landscape.

Caroline County Public Schools is requesting an amendment to the original bill to revert the basis of funding to the current model, rather than the proposed model basing funding respective to the proportion of students. School safety is a campus-wide approach when it comes to the deployment of school safety personnel. Funding school systems on the proposed model disproportionately impacts 17 of the 24 school districts. Every school system faces similar challenges as it relates to costs associated with adequate coverage for each school, regardless of the number of students served in each school building.

For these reasons, Caroline County Public Schools requests a **favorable with amendments** committee report for Senate Bill 1077.