



SENATE BILL 1077 Public Schools - Appropriations for School Safety Expenditures - School Security Employees

STATEMENT OF INFORMATION

DATE: February 28, 2024

COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation

SUMMARY OF BILL: Senate Bill 1077 increases the annual mandated appropriation to the Safe Schools Fund to provide grants to local school systems or law enforcement agencies to assist in providing adequate law enforcement coverage for public schools, from \$10 million to \$15 million in fiscal 2026, and to \$20.0 million in fiscal 2027 and each year thereafter. The bill also (1) expands the authorized uses of the grant funds to include school security employees and (2) alters the basis for the allocation of the funds to be the proportion of students enrolled in each local school system instead of the proportion of schools in each local school system.

EXPLANATION: Senate Bill 1077 increases State general fund mandated costs by \$5 million in fiscal 2026 and by \$10 million in fiscal 2027 and every year thereafter.

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) is charged with submitting a balanced budget to the General Assembly annually and will be working with the General Assembly to achieve structural balance over the long-term. In light of current projected general fund deficits in fiscal 2026 forward, the Department urges caution in passing legislation significantly reducing general fund revenues. State government must be intentional, disciplined, and strategic with its allocation of State funding to ensure maximum impact toward priority outcomes. It would be challenging for the State to manage a significant increase in spending given the forecasted out-year deficits for the General Fund.

However, DBM notes that the provisions in Senate Bill 1077 expanding authorized uses of grant funds are beneficial given that the Maryland Center for School Safety has insufficient demand for the program as it exists currently in statute. The annual appropriation has been \$10 million since fiscal 2020, yet annual grant expenditures have remained at or below \$5.2 million. Authorization to use the funds for school security employees may encourage local school systems to use a greater portion of the funds than they have in the past.

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