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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of SB0540 - Education - School Mapping Data Program - Established

Mr. Chair, Madame Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

SB0540 authorizes the School Safety Subcabinet to use funds in the Safe Schools Fund to support a grant program to make standardized, accurate maps of schools accessible to public safety officials to ensure efficient response to any emergency on a school campus.

Why does this require legislation?

- School blueprints across the state are unusable for communication as they do not reflect the layout of the school and lack critical information about the building and campus. They are not standardized, accurate, or labeled to reflect the nomenclature of the facility, so it is difficult for first responders to communicate or orient with them. In the aftermath of the Robb Elementary School shooting in Uvalde, TX, officials found that maps "lacked sufficient detail" and were "inaccurate," which deterred alternate entries into the classroom (DOJ Report, Texas House Report).
- School maps are inaccessible to first responders during an emergency. School blueprints are not compatible or integrated in the software systems that allow city, county, and state first responders access to maps during a crisis. After the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, CT, reports found that neither "floor plans nor schematics of the school were readily available for tactical search units" (Connecticut State Police AAR).

What does the legislation accomplish?

- Establishes a school mapping standard that is modeled off best practices from the military.
- Standardizes school maps by requiring schools to maintain a map that combines accurate facility floor plans, overhead imagery of the campus, and a gridded overlay.
- Requires school mapping data be verified by a walk-through of site when produced.
- Requires that school mapping data be compatible with existing software platforms used by both public safety agencies at the local, state, and federal-level, and that future updates to school maps be shared with public safety, without requiring those agencies to purchase special software or pay to access the school maps.

Why does a map need to be compatible software platforms used by public safety agencies for free?

- Public safety agencies at the local, state, and federal level rely upon different software systems to view maps. If the school map is compatible with multiple software systems, public safety can communicate from the same map. This allows first responders from multiple agencies and multiple disciplines (i.e., police, fire, EMS, 911, SWAT) access to mapping data regardless of the software platform they currently use. It prevents a vendor from forcing public safety to procure or use new software to get to school mapping data.

I have submitted a sponsor amendment that would have the Maryland Center for School Safety administer this bill instead of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The Interagency Commission on School Construction would development standards for mapping.

Per the Fiscal Note, SB0540 as amended would have a marginal cost to the state to cover the cost of hiring one education program specialist with expertise in mapping software platforms to manage and assess grant applications and award and oversee grant awards. For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB0540.