



PSSAM
Public School Superintendents' Association
OF MARYLAND

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BILL: HB 1167

TITLE: Maryland Center for School Safety - Statewide Secure Schools
Emergency Response Program - Established

DATE: February 21, 2024

POSITION: Unfavorable

COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means Committee
House Appropriations Committee

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **opposes HB 1167.**

House Bill 1167 establishes the Statewide Secure Schools Emergency Response Program to be administered by the Maryland Center for School Safety to improve the safety and security of public schools in the State by implementing a certain emergency notification system; requiring the Center to ensure that the Program has been implemented in each public school in the State on or before September 1, 2026; and requiring the Governor to include in the annual budget bill for fiscal year 2026 an appropriation of \$4,500,000 for the Program.

PSSAM appreciates the sponsor's interest and advocacy on this extremely important topic of student safety; however, we strongly oppose efforts to mandate protocols and programs that override local decision-making in these efforts. This legislation is extremely prescriptive and requires a program with an incredibly specific set of requirements that is almost impossible to find in the current marketplace. With safety programs that require local system integration, best practices call for local decision making and collaboration between school systems and their emergency responding agencies.

We support the Maryland Center for School Safety's (MCSS) opposition to a one-size state procured system, not an opposition to the creation of a panic button system. In fact, MCSS reports that in response to last year's SB 677 (Safety – Statewide Secure Schools Emergency Response Program – Established), they convened a group of stakeholders including MDEM, local emergency managers, local 9-1-1, and local school system safety experts to conduct a study on integrated systems. The results indicated there are evidence-based ways to improve school

safety, specific to emergency communications, that would be more valuable than a statewide panic-button system, such as intercoms, PAs, BDAs, and CAD to CAD integration.

PSSAM continues to support MCSS' research and development of best practices to guide any enhancements of local emergency response systems over a legislatively mandated system, such as the one provided in this bill.

For these reasons, PSSAM requests an **unfavorable** report on House Bill 1167.