



Washington County BOARD OF EDUCATION

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BILL: House Bill 157 / Senate Bill 136
TITLE: Education – Safe Schools Fund – Grant Allocations
HEARING DATE: January 28, 2025 / January 15, 2025
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: House Appropriations / Senate Budget and Taxation
CONTACT: Ms. Ilissa Ramm, Chief Legal Counsel, 301-766-2919

Washington County Board of Education supports House Bill 157 (Senate Bill 136) to reallocate Safe Schools Fund monies to local school systems that continue to have unmet safety and security needs.

Currently, the Safe Schools Fund (“Fund”) is allocated \$10 million each fiscal year to fund grants to local school systems and law enforcement agencies to assist in providing adequate law enforcement coverage for public schools. Each fiscal year, local school systems are allocated a specific portion of the Fund which they can access by applying for and being awarded grants. During Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024, Washington County Board of Education was allocated and awarded grants in the amounts of \$324,172 and \$321,429 respectively, which was used for providing local law enforcement and school safety employees at after school and evening activities throughout the county.

However, not all local school systems take advantage of the Safe Schools Fund grant monies available to them as evidenced by the monies remaining in the Fund at the end of Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024 - \$6.7 million and \$3.7 million respectively. Some local school systems, like Washington County, take full advantage of the available funds by receiving and utilizing their full allocated grant funding yet continue to have unmet safety and security needs due to a lack of adequate funding.

A safe and secure school environment is an important aspect of student learning. Washington County Board of Education is committed to providing such an environment for students, staff, and visitors, but due to funding constraints has unmet safety and security needs. If allowed to access unallocated monies from the Fund, Washington County may be able to extend after school and evening coverage to more schools and events and add to our team of school safety employees or School Resource Officers (SRO). Washington County Public Schools is unique in that it pays for the full salary and benefits for each of its SROs.

Washington County Board of Education supports House Bill 157 (Senate Bill 136) because it does not require the state to allocate additional monies to the Fund during this budget shortfall period for the state, but to reallocate monies already in the fund so they are fully utilized for their intended purposes – providing safe schools. At a time when many local school systems are experiencing funding shortages, all existing state funding should be made available to local school systems that can demonstrate an unmet safety and security need for which they do not have the funding because school safety is of utmost importance.

Washington County Board of Education fully supports House Bill 157 and Senate Bill 98 and requests the Appropriations Committee and Budget and Taxation Committee to issue favorable reports.

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. Gary Willow, Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Mr. Jeffrey Proulx, Chief Operating Officer
Ms. Ilissa Ramm, Chief Legal Counsel
Mr. Brian Dulay, Director of Governmental Relations, Maryland Association of Boards of Education
Ms. Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland