



Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate,
Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
March 27, 2025

HB0782: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS
Study on Detecting Deadly Weapons in Public Middle and High Schools

**Board of Education
of Howard County**

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The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **Study on Detecting Deadly Weapons in Public Middle and High Schools** with amendments to address funding needs associated with increased physical security enhancements.

HB0782 requires the Maryland State Department of Education to study middle and high school security including how best to detect and report the detection of deadly weapons to law enforcement. The study must include an audit of current security infrastructure and gaps in each public school in the state, and an evaluation of: the feasibility of using available methods not currently used by local school systems to make security improvements; the best way to adapt current security systems to achieve better detection of deadly weapons and rapid reporting to law enforcement; software that uses artificial intelligence to identify deadly weapons and the necessary steps to ensure the software integrates with current safety measures; increased use of security cameras in middle and high schools and their ideal placement; and increased use of metal detectors in middle and high school entrances. The report must be submitted by the State to the Speaker of the House and the House Ways and Means Committee in a manner that does not jeopardize school safety by December 1, 2025.

School safety is a core function of school system operations, with staff dedicated to ensuring children and staff are provided a safe, healthy, and supportive environment. Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) staff regularly look for vulnerabilities in the physical security of schools and have recently undertaken a review of detection and notification practices following the arrest of a student at Howard High School who was in possession of a gun during the school day. As is the intent of HB0782, more can be done however to increase the physical security of school buildings.

HB0782 has a high probability of setting up a study that would identify many technological tools that could be used in middle and high schools, but with limited resources to see the recommendations for improved security through to implementation. Weapons detection systems not only cost money for the equipment, installation, and maintenance, but also require increased security personnel to operate the systems. With limited operating and capital funding available, an amendment to set up a dedicated funding source for physical security initiatives as envisioned by this bill would be beneficial for local school systems.

The Board also recognizes that prevention in the use of deadly weapons and youth crime extends beyond the school to the local community. As part of the study conducted under HB0782, the Board respectfully asks the sponsor to add an amendment that prioritizes prevention of incidents by also studying community and societal impacts.

With amendments to address funding needs for physical security and provisions for the study of ways to increase preventative measures beyond schools, we urge a FAVORABLE report on HB0772 from this Committee.