

Public Health Law Clinic_HB 782_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Anna Kate Cagle

Position: FAV

Testimony in Support of House Bill 782

Study on Detecting Deadly Weapons in Public Middle and High Schools
Before the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee: March 27, 2025

“There is at least one place, other than a home, in which every person, whether a child or an adult, should feel absolutely safe and secure from harm: *school*.”¹

The Public Health Law Clinic submits this testimony in support of House Bill 782 to initiate a study to determine how best to detect and report deadly weapons in Maryland public middle and high schools. In 2010, there were fifteen school shootings in the U.S. Since then, the annual number of these tragedies has increased by more than two thousand percent, with 349 school shootings occurring in 2023.² Research indicates that improving safety measures in schools is an effective tool to prevent targeted attacks and other violence.³ By assessing the current security deficiencies in schools and evaluating how best to fill these gaps, House Bill 782 will be a first step to improving the safety of students and staff in Maryland public schools.

The U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) conducted a study of thirty-seven incidents of targeted violence in K-12 schools in the U.S. to identify risk factors for these tragic events. While NTAC concluded that improving school security is an effective tool to prevent violence, it noted that no two schools have identical security needs.⁴ Accordingly, each school should undergo a comprehensive assessment of present security gaps to be able to recommend and implement the most effective solutions. By requiring the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) to meet with members of each local school system to assess the physical and technological security measures currently used in public middle and high schools and identify any areas of improvement, HB 782 will facilitate the most effective recommendations to create safer schools.

Similar to the NTAC Report, the Sandy Hook Commission studied the Connecticut tragedy to make recommendations for schools to prevent similar events and other violence. In the report, the Commission explained that while schools cannot eliminate the risk of violence, they can prevent and reduce the incidence of these events by improving security measures and implementing safe school design and operation strategies.⁵ If preventative measures fail and a dangerous situation arises, the report emphasized the importance of schools having systems in place that immediately notify law enforcement. The report explained that “every second counts between the initiation of a threatening event and the arrival of emergency responders,” with “[s]econds and minutes equat[ing] to lives lost or saved.”⁶ By aiming to improve deadly weapon detection and reporting time, HB 782 could save lives.

¹ THE SANDY HOOK ADVISORY COMMISSION, FINAL REPORT OF THE SANDY HOOK ADVISORY COMMISSION 4 (2015).

² K-12 SCHOOL SHOOTING DATABASE, *How Many School Shootings? All Incidents from 1966-Present*, <https://k12ssdb.org/all-shootings> (last visited Feb. 17, 2025).

³ THE SANDY HOOK ADVISORY COMMISSION, FINAL REPORT OF THE SANDY HOOK ADVISORY COMMISSION 29-31, 40 (2015); Blair Ames, *Making Schools Safe for Students*, 218 NAT’L INS. JUSTICE 1, 2-3 (2019).

⁴ Blair Ames, *Making Schools Safe for Students*, 218 NAT’L INS. JUSTICE 1, 2 (2019).

⁵ THE SANDY HOOK ADVISORY COMMISSION, FINAL REPORT OF THE SANDY HOOK ADVISORY COMMISSION 4 (Mar. 6, 2015).

⁶ THE SANDY HOOK ADVISORY COMMISSION, FINAL REPORT OF THE SANDY HOOK ADVISORY COMMISSION 4, 26 (2015).

New technology presents an opportunity to improve school safety without the negative consequences of traditional security measures. Companies have recently incorporated Artificial Intelligence into surveillance technology to identify and report deadly weapons in schools before they are used. Although this technology is new and evolving, it is a promising tool that could decrease the time it takes to detect and report deadly weapons in schools, thus preventing the incidence and severity of violent events.⁷ Additionally, this technology could improve school safety without adding to student stress. Research demonstrates that visible security measures in schools, such as metal detectors and school resource officers, increase fear and anxiety among students without improving safety or preventing violence.⁸ Therefore, requiring MCSS to evaluate the need and feasibility of integrating software, such as Artificial Intelligence Technology, with existing security cameras will increase school safety and law enforcement communication time while preserving student mental health.

Conclusion

Children and adults should not have to worry about their safety at school. The first step to improving school safety and preventing violence is to identify security weaknesses and assess the feasibility of incorporating security measures to address these shortcomings. For these reasons, we request a favorable report on House Bill 782.

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Public Health Law Clinic at the University of Maryland Carey School of Law and not by the School of Law, the University of Maryland, Baltimore, or the University of Maryland System.

⁷ Amy K Bolin, *A New Approach to Early Detection and Privacy in School Security*, ADVANCING SECURITY WORLDWIDE (March 1, 2024), <https://www.asisonline.org/security-management-magazine/articles/2024/03/schools/early-detection-privacy/>.

⁸ Billie Gastic, *Metal Detectors and Feeling Safe at School*, 43 EDUCATION AND URBAN SOCIETY 486, 486 498 (2011); Abigail Hankin et al., *Impacts of Metal Detector Use in Schools: Insights From 15 Years of Research*, 81 *Journal of School Health* 100, 100-106 (2011); Matthew T. Theriot & John G. Orme, *School Resource Officers and Students' Feelings of Safety at School*, 14 YOUTH VIOLENCE & JUVENILE JUSTICE 130 (2024).

HB782 testimony - CRASC.pdf

Uploaded by: Julien Halleman

Position: FAV



HB782 Study on Detecting Deadly Weapons in Public Middle and High Schools

Thursday, March 27, 2025

EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

SUPPORT

Our names are Julien Halleman, Noah Gordon, Olivia Chin, and Dhru Nahan, and we are students of Anne Arundel County and executive team members of the Chesapeake Regional Association of Student Councils (CRASC). We are writing in support of HB782 Study on Detecting Deadly Weapons in Public Middle and High Schools. If passed, this bill would mandate the Maryland center for school safety to study the detection of deadly weapons in public middle and high schools.

Safety has become an issue of utmost concern in this day and age. Schools, once places of refuge for all students, have increasingly become places of fear. In a world filled with division and uncertainty, schools should be places where students feel secure—where their only concern is their education and preparing for the future.

From AI-based detection systems to advancements in traditional metal detectors, the methods of keeping students safe are constantly evolving. Studies have shown that while some security measures can deter weapons from entering schools, there is no universal solution. For example, recent implementations of advanced weapons detection technology have shown promising results. The School District of Lee County in Florida reported a 39% decrease in total incidents from 604 in 2023 to 366 in 2024 after introducing the OPEN GATE weapons detection systems. This suggests that modern detection methods may contribute to enhancing school security.

We must act proactively, rather than reactively. This study will provide Maryland with the data needed to make informed decisions about school safety, ensuring that any measures taken are both effective and feasible. The safety of our students and educators should never be left to guesswork—this study is a necessary step toward creating a secure learning environment for all.

There has been much discussion in this session on how to improve our education without massive funding, and student's feeling safe and secure is undoubtedly an excellent way to achieve this.

The CRASC Legislative Department refers back to the following relevant clauses of the CRASC Platform:

- *CRASC Supports...* Responsiveness to school safety and security threats such as active shooter, bomb threats, violent altercations, and local criminal activity ; (Plank 5, Clause H)
- *CRASC Supports...* Schools, policymakers, and the community taking a proactive stance on school safety; (Plank 9, Clause G)

Accordingly, CRASC respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report on SB151.

Respectfully Submitted,

Julien Halleman, Secretary of Legislation, julienh123@icloud.com

Noah Gordon, Legislative Liaison, noah.gordonn08@gmail.com

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House Bill 782 - MCSS Senate Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Kimberly Buckheit

Position: FAV

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|------------------|---|-------------------|---|
| Bill: | House Bill 782 | Date: | March 27, 2025 |
| Title: | Study on Detecting Deadly Weapons in Public Middle and High Schools | Committee: | Education, Energy and the Environment |
| Position: | Letter of Support | Contact: | Kimberly Buckheit kimberly.buckheit1@maryland.gov 443-902-0622 |

On behalf of the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS), thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter of support for **House Bill 782**. MCSS remains committed to assisting local school systems in implementing a [layered approach](#) to school safety.

MCSS appreciates being able to provide feedback and supports the amended bill including:

- Shifting the designated agency from the Department of Education to MCSS.
- Modifying the reporting timeline to include an interim report on December 1, 2025 and a final report on December 1, 2026.
- Including language to protect from public record all data, reports, and materials that include potentially sensitive safety or security information about a public school collected for the purpose of meeting the requirement outlined in this bill as afforded to other school safety and security materials under the Public Information Act (General Provisions § 4-314.1).

MCSS welcomes the opportunity to meet with members of each local school system to assess physical and technological security measures currently in use and to assist in the identification of any gaps or areas of improvement. This information will build on information currently collected by MCSS and further enhance local safety and security efforts. MCSS remains committed to providing the most current information about emerging school safety technologies to Maryland schools as local communities make decisions to best meet their needs. The study and evaluations in House Bill 782 align with this commitment.

Thank you again for taking the time to consider the information shared above, and MCSS respectfully requests the committee give House Bill 782 a favorable report.

HB0782- State Board- Support- Crossover.pdf

Uploaded by: Madeline Houck

Position: FAV

TO: Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment

BILL: House Bill (HB) 782 – *Study on Detecting Deadly Weapons in Public Middle and High Schools*

DATE: March 27, 2025

POSITION: Support

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the State Board of Education support **House Bill (HB) 782 – *Study on Detecting Deadly Weapons in Public Middle and High Schools***. MSDE appreciates the work done with the House legislators to amend the bill.

HB 782 mandates a study by the Maryland Center for School Safety in improving deadly weapons detection in public middle and high schools. The study will comprehensively audit current security infrastructure, evaluating existing measures and identifying areas needing improvement.

MSDE respectfully requests that you consider this letter of support as you discuss and deliberate **HB 782**. For further information, please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne (Executive Director of Government Affairs) at 410-767-0504, or Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov.

HB0782 Howard Co BOE Testimony 032725 for EEE - De

Uploaded by: Staff Howard County

Position: FWA



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of Howard County**

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**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**

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.