

TO: House Committee on Ways and Means

BILL: House Bill 694 – Public Schools - Individuals With Disabilities - Main Entrance Accessibility and Emergency Planning

DATE: February 25, 2025

POSITION: Information

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is providing information for consideration regarding House Bill 694 – Public Schools - Individuals With Disabilities - Main Entrance Accessibility and Emergency Planning, which requires each county board of education to annually identify on its website and in a report, the number of main entrances to public school buildings in the county that are not accessible for individuals with disabilities and not in compliance with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and requires that each local school system send a copy of their system’s Emergency Plan to MSDE and that MSDE will analyze and report to the General Assembly on whether each local school system is in compliance with current guidelines and regulations.

It is important to note that some of the provisions of HB 694 are duplicative of current tasks assigned to MSDE and the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS). The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.02.02.05 – Annual Certification requires that by September 30 of each year, each local superintendent of schools and the Head of the SEED School certify to the State Superintendent that the requirements of this chapter are being implemented, including whether LEA emergency plans are aligned with the MSDE emergency planning guidelines. Each local superintendent of schools and the Head of the SEED are required to send a copy of the LEAs central administration emergency plan to MSDE, if updated from the previous year. These plans are reviewed and analyzed each year, upon submission.

Additionally, outlined in the Maryland Code, Education Article § 7-1501 requires LEAs to submit their emergency operations plans (EOPs) to the MCSS. Under this law, the Maryland Center for School Safety is tasked with assisting schools in creating, reviewing, and updating their emergency plans. Specifically, the law stipulates the following:

- Section 7-1501(b) requires each LEA to have an Emergency Operations Plan in place to address different types of emergencies (natural disasters, active shooter events, etc.).
- Section 7-1501(c) requires that LEAs submit their Emergency Operations Plans to the MCSS for review and approval. The MCSS helps ensure that the plans comply with state standards and best practices for school safety.
- This law is part of Maryland's broader school safety initiative to ensure that schools are prepared for a range of emergency situations and have protocols in place to respond effectively. The MCSS provides resources, training, and guidance to LEAs



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for developing and maintaining these plans.

- The Maryland Code, Education Article § 7-1502, further reinforces the need for schools to regularly update their emergency plans and ensure they meet the evolving safety standards set by the state.

MSDE remains committed to the accessibility and safety of all Maryland Public Schools and its collaboration with the Maryland Center for School Safety to ensure compliance with current state and federal laws and regulations.

We respectfully request that you consider this information as you deliberate **HB 694**.

For further information, please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne (Executive Director of Government Affairs) at 410-767-0504, or Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov.