

Testimony HB 76 School Safety Grants.pdf

Uploaded by: Dawana Sterrette

Position: FAV

**Testimony of the
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
In Support of
House Bill 76 Local School Systems – School Safety – Grant Allocations**

February 17, 2026

The Baltimore City School Board has reviewed the proposed legislation and have identified meaningful opportunities for our district to enhance school safety initiatives. This grant would be particularly beneficial in addressing our staffing needs, including the addition of a grant-funded Community Resource Officer, envisioned as a civilian position. This role would strengthen relationships between School Police and Baltimore City students.

Funding could also support essential materials and informational initiatives such as school assemblies, public service announcements, and community fairs. These efforts are vital for promoting safety awareness and building trust within our school community.

In short, the proposed legislation provides an opportunity to secure additional resources for innovative strategies that enhance school safety, improve relationships with students, and create a safer and more connected school environment. The Board would caution that there should be a definition of “unmet need” so that the additional funding is adequately provided to school districts in a fair and reasonable manner.

For the foregoing reasons, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports House Bill 76 and urges a favorable report.

Dawana Merritt Sterrette, Esq.
Executive Director, Legislative and Government Affairs
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
443-250-0190

HB 76 Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Delegate Griffith Delegate Griffith

Position: FAV

MIKE GRIFFITH
Legislative District 35A
Cecil and Harford Counties

Ways and Means Committee

Subcommittees

Early Childhood and
Special Education

Revenues



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 423
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3444
800-492-7122 Ext. 3444
Mike.Griffith@house.maryland.gov

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

H.B. 0076 – Local School Systems – School Safety – Grant Allocations

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Delegate Mike Griffith, and I respectfully request a favorable report on H.B. 76: *Local School Systems – School Safety – Grant Allocations*.

H.B. 76 is a straightforward bill that would allow local education agencies (LEAs) to reapply within the same fiscal year for additional funding through the Safe Schools Fund (SSF), administered by the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS).

To qualify for reapplication, an LEA must fully expend its initial grant allocation and demonstrate a need for additional funding within that same fiscal year. The decision to approve a second allocation would remain at the discretion of MCSS, the agency responsible for administering the SSF statewide and best equipped to evaluate the availability and appropriate distribution of remaining funds.

This change is necessary because, under current law, the SSF receives an annual \$10 million appropriation to support LEAs and local law enforcement agencies in meeting annual reporting requirements related to law enforcement coverage in public schools, most commonly through School Resource Officers (SROs). Each year, funding is distributed using a set formula rather than a needs-based process. As a result, some jurisdictions receive funding that may not fully cover their SRO needs, while other funds remain unspent statewide because LEAs are not currently permitted to reapply during the same fiscal year.

In other words, even if an LEA exhausts its initial allocation and still has an unmet need for SRO coverage, it has no mechanism to request additional SSF funding. H.B. 76 addresses this gap by authorizing MCSS to open a second round of applications, allowing remaining funds to be used where they are most needed.

This is especially important given the role SROs play in protecting students and school staff. Over the last several decades, Maryland has seen an increase not only in the number of violent incidents occurring in schools, but also in the severity of those incidents. Although the General Assembly unanimously established statewide SRO funding in 2019, these challenges have continued to grow.

Currently, only 19.5% of Maryland public schools have a full-time SRO, a decrease from over 20% in 2023. At a time when school safety concerns are rising, this decline leaves too many schools without adequate coverage.

In addition to their security role, SROs also serve an important community function by building relationships with students and staff, helping prevent future criminal behavior, and supporting students in crisis. They can also play a particularly important role for students with special needs, where familiarity and trust can help prevent escalation and ensure safety for everyone involved. As a father of a special

needs child in Harford County Public Schools, I can personally attest to the value of that relationship and the peace of mind it provides.

I also want to address a common concern: that SROs are primarily focused on arresting students for minor, nonviolent issues such as truancy. Based on my conversations with SROs across the state, arrests are viewed as a last resort, and their primary role is relationship-building, safety support, and de-escalation. Truancy enforcement is not the focus of their work.

Finally, I would note that, at the recommendation of the Department of Budget and Management, we worked closely with MCSS last year on this legislation to ensure the language accurately reflects the bill's intent while respecting the agency's administrative role.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on H.B. 76. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you,

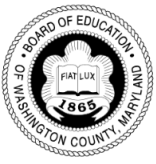


Delegate Mike Griffith
District 35A, Cecil and Harford Counties
Vice Chair, Maryland Veterans Caucus, Maryland General Assembly-House of Delegates

HB 76 FAVORABLE Wash. Co. Bd. of Education 2-17-26

Uploaded by: Jamie Brown

Position: FAV



BILL: House Bill 76
TITLE: Local School Systems – School Safety – Grant Allocations
HEARING DATE: February 17, 2026
POSITION: FAVORABLE
COMMITTEE: Appropriations Committee
CONTACT: Ms. Jamie Brown, Paralegal & Legislative Representative, 301-766-2946

Washington County Board of Education supports House Bill 76 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 2024 and 2025, Washington County Board of Education was allocated and awarded grants in the amounts of \$321,429 and \$316,436 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 2024 and 2025 - \$3.7 million and approximately \$2 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 76 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 76 and requests the Appropriations Committee to issue a favorable report.

Thank you.

Cc: Washington County Board of Education Members
Washington County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly
Dr. David T. Sovine, Superintendent
Dr. Gary Willow, Deputy Superintendent
Mr. Jeffrey Proulx, Chief Operating Officer

HB 76 - Local School System -Safety Grant Allocati

Uploaded by: Sam Mathias

Position: FAV

BILL: House Bill 76
TITLE: Local School Systems – School Safety – Grant Allocations
HEARING DATE: February 17, 2025
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Appropriations
CONTACT: Sam Mathias, Legal & Policy Director (smathias@mabe.org)

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all 24 local boards of education across the State, **supports House Bill 76.**

House Bill 76 authorizes the reallocation of Safe Schools Fund grant dollars within the same fiscal year to local school systems that have fully expended their initial allocation and can demonstrate unmet need. Under current law, the Governor is required to allocate \$10 million annually to a fund supporting grants for local school systems and law enforcement agencies to provide adequate law enforcement coverage in public schools, including School Resource Officers and school security employees. Grants are distributed proportionally based on each system’s share of public schools statewide. While unspent funds revert to the Safe Schools Fund at the end of the fiscal year, they may not currently be redistributed.

This bill provides a practical and responsible adjustment by allowing unused funds to be directed to school systems with demonstrated need. Local boards of education appreciate the General Assembly’s recognition that school safety demands can vary across systems and fluctuate during the fiscal year. Allowing mid-year reallocation promotes flexibility, maximizes the use of appropriated funds, and ensures that available resources are deployed where they are most needed.

For these reasons, **MABE supports House Bill 76 and respectfully requests a favorable report.**

HB 76 - Local School Systems - School Safety - Gra

Uploaded by: Zaniah Anderson

Position: FAV



PSSAM
Public School Superintendents' Association
OF MARYLAND

Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director
1217 S. Potomac Street
Baltimore, MD 21224
410-935-7281
marypat.fannon@pssam.org

BILL: HB 76
TITLE: Local School Systems - School Safety - Grant Allocations
DATE: February 17, 2026
POSITION: Favorable
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, **supports** House Bill 76.

This bill authorizes the reallocation of grants from the Safe Schools Fund to local school systems that have fully expended their grant allocation and demonstrate unmet need within the same fiscal year. This act shall take into effect by July 1, 2026.

Under current law, the Governor is required to allocate \$10 million annually to a fund supporting grants for local school systems and law enforcement agencies to provide adequate law enforcement coverage in public schools, including School Resource Officers (SROs) and school security employees (as authorized by Chapter 179 of 2024). Grants are distributed proportionally based on each system's share of public schools in the state. Any unspent funds revert to the fund annually but cannot be reallocated.

Local superintendents appreciate the General Assembly's initiative to reallocate these funds to local school systems who demonstrate the most need. This approach empowers districts with greater autonomy and ensures a more equitable distribution of resources, directing support to where it is needed most.

For these reasons, PSSAM **supports** House Bill 76 and requests a **favorable** report.

MD Catholic Conference_HB 76_FWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Garrett O'Day

Position: FWA



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 17, 2026

HB 76
Education - Safe Schools Fund - Grant Allocations

House Appropriations Committee

Position: FAVORABLE w/ Amendments

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of House Bill 76, with amendments. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government. We offer this testimony on behalf of the families of approximately 50,000 students served by over 150 PreK-12 Catholic schools in Maryland.

House Bill 76 allows funds from the annual appropriation for the Safe Schools Fund of \$10,000,000 to be reallocated to LEAs that have fully expended their annual allocation and have a demonstrated particular additional need within that same fiscal year. The Safe Schools Fund provides grants to local school systems and local law enforcement agencies for school safety.

The safety of our school students in all Maryland schools is a paramount concern, whether they attend a public or private school. One in eight Maryland students, or around 138,000, attend a nonpublic school. Prior to 2023, the state budget was providing \$3.5 million for lower-tuition nonpublic schools to receive a per pupil allocation grant for school safety and security measures, but this was removed last year. **Especially with increased threats upon members of denominations of our diverse group of Maryland faith-based schools, security dollars are of great need. Thus, we respectfully request that this committee provide that same \$3.5 million in this legislation through the attached amendment.**

Many of the schools with lower-income student enrollments would not have been able to complete the security upgrades without this funding and should be able to continue to do so annually. The program is making an impact statewide and is highly popular with administrators in every jurisdiction. Student safety should not be determined by whether you attend a public or nonpublic school. For this reason, we urge this committee to adopt the aforementioned amendment and issue a favorable report on House Bill 76, as amended.

Amendment to House Bill 76

Amendment No. 1

Page 2, line 17, insert:

7-1514. Nonpublic School Safety Improvement Grant Program

- (A) THERE IS A NONPUBLIC SCHOOL SAFETY IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM.
- (B) THE PURPOSE OF THE FUND IS TO PROVIDE GRANTS TO NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE STATE TO ENHANCE SCHOOL SAFETY.
- (C) BEGINNING IN FISCAL YEAR 2027 AND EACH FISCAL YEAR THEREAFTER, THE GOVERNOR SHALL PROVIDE AT LEAST \$3,500,000 TO NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS THAT WERE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE AID TO NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS R00A03.04 (FOR THE PURCHASE OF TEXTBOOKS OR COMPUTER HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE FOR LOANS TO STUDENTS IN ELIGIBLE NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS) DURING THE PRECEDING SCHOOL YEAR OR NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS THAT SERVE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH THE NON-PUBLIC PLACEMENT PROGRAM R00A02.07 SUBPROGRAM
- (D) NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING IN THE NONPUBLIC SCHOOL SAFETY IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM SHALL RECEIVE A MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF \$65 PER ELIGIBLE NONPUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT FOR PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS, EXCEPT THAT AT SCHOOLS WHERE AT LEAST 20% OF THE STUDENTS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR THE FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE MEAL PROGRAM OR FOR SCHOOLS THAT SERVICE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH THE NON-PUBLIC PLACEMENT PROGRAM, THERE SHALL BE A DISTRIBUTION OF \$85 PER STUDENT, AND NO INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL MAY RECEIVE LESS THAN \$5,000.

HB76 Oppose (Written).pdf

Uploaded by: Kenzie Funk

Position: UNF



**Testimony in OPPOSITION of
House Bill 76: Local School Systems – School Safety – Grant Allocations**

Appropriations Committee

Position: Oppose

February 17, 2025

Strong Schools Maryland is a network of education advocates dedicated to ensuring the full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future so every student in our state is equipped to thrive upon graduation. **Strong Schools Maryland urges an unfavorable vote on House Bill 157**, which if enacted, would allow LEAs who have already spent their grant allotment on law enforcement in public schools to receive additional funds, rather than supporting all LEAs to receive funds to make their schools and students safer.

The approach proposed in HB157 risks exacerbating funding inequities across Maryland and does not prioritize evidence-based school safety strategies as the bill permits (and implicitly encourages) school systems to exhaust and reapply for grant funds to be spent on police and school resource officers. Research shows that police presence in our schools does not protect our students from crimes such as school shootings, but rather further marginalizes students and limits the students' feelings of belongingness.¹ The presence of school resource officers and the harm caused disproportionately impacts Black students and students with disabilities.²

How do we approach school safety in a productive manner? Data shows that the use of restorative practices – not increased law enforcement – improves outcomes for students and overall school safety; we see this right here in Maryland. Baltimore City released a report summarizing the impact of employing restorative practices in schools; school suspensions dropped by 44%, 72% of staff reported improved school climate, and much more.³

Legislation passed that impacts students and children should promote trust between the school and students. Additional funding for policing students contradicts the Blueprint's commitment to the restorative and best practices. We urge this committee to reject HB 76 and focus on advancing legislation that aligns with the promises Maryland has made to all students by expanding student mental health services, wraparound supports, and restorative practices, which are more effective at keeping schools safe. In short, **HB 157 exacerbates funding inequalities among Maryland's districts while failing to support LEAs in applying for funds that will *actually* make our schools, students, school staff, and communities safer.**

For these reasons, we strongly urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 157.

For more information, contact Kenzie Funk: kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org

¹ [O'Neill and McGloin, 2007](#)

² [MSDE 2021](#)

³ [Restorative Practises in Baltimore City School, 2020](#)