

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 531
Ways and Means

(Delegate Wu, *et al.*)

Education, Energy, and the Environment

State Department of Education - Public Schools STEM and Robotics Program - Study

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to study the existing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and robotics extracurricular programs currently in place in high schools throughout the State. MSDE must examine (1) requirements for administering existing programs, (2) requirements for participation in existing programs; (3) funding sources for existing programs; and (4) impediments to establishing a STEM or robotics extracurricular program in a school. MSDE must make use of available data to the extent practicable. MSDE must make recommendations on the feasibility of (1) adopting a uniform set of standards governing the operation and funding of extracurricular STEM and robotics programs throughout the State; (2) establishing a competitive extracurricular STEM or robotics program in every public school in the State; and (3) creating a competitive robotics program as a varsity sport in public high schools throughout the State. By January 1, 2027, MSDE must report to the General Assembly on the results of its study and recommendations. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MSDE can likely complete the study with existing resources, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: Local school systems can collaborate on the study as needed with existing resources. Local revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Chapters 681 and 682 of 2016 established the Robotics Grant Program to increase the number of robotics programs in the State. As expanded under Chapter 428 of 2019, the program may provide grants to public schools and nonprofit organizations that (1) provide youth with an out-of-school-time experience that focuses on personal and workforce development and (2) serve public school students as a majority of its participating youth. Schools and nonprofit organizations proposing a new robotics club or with an existing robotics program or club are eligible for a grant. Nonprofit organizations must be associated with a public school to be eligible. The Governor must appropriate at least \$350,000 in the annual State budget for the program.

MSDE advises that the Robotics Grant Program supports 30 grantees across 11 local school systems and 4 non-profit organizations, which support robotics programs at over 30 high schools, 12 middle schools, and 45 elementary schools.

State Effect: MSDE advises that the bill's requirements and structure as an MSDE-led study cannot be managed within current staffing levels. MSDE estimates that the bill necessitates an additional \$100,000 in expenditures to facilitate research design, data analysis, stakeholder facilitation, and reporting.

However, the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) advises that the scope of research for the study is limited to STEM and robotics programs *currently in place in high schools throughout the State*. The bill further instructs MSDE to make use of *available data* to the extent practicable. DLS acknowledges that in-depth, multi-state, multi-stakeholder analysis of STEM and robotics programs accompanied by a comprehensive framework for expansion within the bill's six-month timeframe could require additional resources on the scale advised by MSDE. However, the requirements of the bill as written are such that simple surveys of existing STEM and robotics programs (potentially including some already funded by MSDE through the Robotics Grant Program) and generation of a limited set of recommendations on the feasibility of expanding STEM or robotics extracurriculars may satisfy the requirements of the bill. DLS therefore advises that existing resources at MSDE are likely sufficient to produce a report that meets the minimum requirements of the bill.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: SB 990 (Senator Rosapepe) - Rules.

Information Source(s): Department of Commerce; Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Labor; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 16, 2026
jg/clb Third Reader - April 3, 2026
Revised - Amendment(s) - April 3, 2026

Analysis by: Michael E. Sousane

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510