

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 782

(Delegate Atterbeary, *et al.*)

Ways and Means

Education, Energy, and the Environment

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Study on Detecting Deadly Weapons in Public Middle and High Schools

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This bill requires the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) to study how best to detect deadly weapons on public middle and high school properties and have schools rapidly report the detection of a deadly weapon to law enforcement. By December 1, 2025, MCSS must issue an interim report on its findings to the Presiding Officers and selected committees of the General Assembly in a manner that does not jeopardize school safety. By December 1, 2026, MCSS must issue a final report to the same entities. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2025, and terminates June 30, 2027.**

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** No effect in FY 2025. General fund expenditures may increase in FY 2026 and 2027 to conduct the evaluation, but a reliable estimate is not feasible in the absence of clarity regarding the scope and intensity of the evaluation, as discussed below. No effect on revenues.

**Local Effect:** Local school systems can likely participate in the required study and evaluation with existing resources. No effect on revenues.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Bill Summary:** The required study must include a comprehensive evaluation of the current security infrastructure used in each public school system in the State. It must include meetings with members of each local school system to assess (1) physical and technological security measures currently in use and (2) any gaps or areas that require

improvement. MCSS must build on information collected as part of regular safety evaluations required under current law. Information collected is not a public record and must be protected as specified. The study must also, at a minimum, include an evaluation of:

- widely accepted available methods not currently used by public school systems in the State and the feasibility of using those methods to help fill gaps or make improvements in the security system identified in the comprehensive evaluation;
- how the current security system could best be adapted to achieve better detection of deadly weapons and quicker reporting to law enforcement agencies when deadly weapons are detected;
- software used for school safety, as specified;
- an increased use of security cameras in public middle and high schools and their ideal placement; and
- an increased use of metal detectors, including handheld metal detectors, in public middle and high schools.

### **Current Law:**

#### *Safe to Learn Act*

Chapter 30 of 2018, the Maryland Safe to Learn Act, made comprehensive changes designed to improve the safety of the State's public schools. The remainder of this section summarizes relevant provisions of the Act.

#### *School Safety Subcabinet*

The School Safety Subcabinet consists of the following individuals or their designees:

- the State Superintendent of Schools;
- the Secretary of Health;
- the Secretary of State Police;
- the Attorney General;
- the Secretary of Disabilities; and
- the Executive Director of the Interagency Commission on School Construction.

The State Superintendent or designee chairs the subcabinet, and the Executive Director of the Maryland Center for School Safety provides staff.

The Act required each local school system, by June 15, 2019, and regularly thereafter, to conduct a safety evaluation of each public school under its jurisdiction. The purposes of the evaluations are to (1) identify and, if necessary, develop solutions for physical safety concerns, including issues with building security and (2) identify and evaluate any patterns of safety concerns on school property or at school-sponsored events.

### *Maryland Center for School Safety*

Chapter 372 of 2013 established MCSS as an independent unit within State government under the direction of a governing board chaired by the State Superintendent of Schools. Five years later, the Maryland Safe to Learn Act made MCSS an independent unit *within* the Maryland State Department of Education and increased the mandated appropriation for MCSS's operations from \$500,000 to \$2.0 million annually. MCSS's duties include:

- assisting local school systems to identify resources and implement training for students and parents about relationship violence, identifying the signs of unhealthy relationships, and preventing relationship violence;
- analyzing data on School Resource Officers (SROs) and developing guidelines for local school systems regarding the assignment and training of SROs;
- certifying school safety coordinators;
- consulting with local school systems on safety evaluations;
- reviewing and commenting on school emergency plans; and
- reporting on life-threatening incidents that occur on public school grounds.

### *School Resource Officers and School Security Employees*

The Maryland Safe to Learn Act defines an SRO as (1) a law enforcement officer assigned to a school in accordance with a memorandum of understanding between a local law enforcement agency and a local school system or (2) a Baltimore City School Police Officer, as defined in current law.

Each local school system must file a report with MCSS that identifies (1) the public schools that have an SRO assigned and (2) if no SRO is assigned to a public school, the adequate local law enforcement coverage that will be provided to the school.

Annually, the Governor must include \$10.0 million for the Safe Schools Fund to provide grants to local school systems and law enforcement agencies to meet the SRO/law enforcement coverage requirements established by Chapter 30. Grants must be made based on the proportion of public schools in each jurisdiction and may be used for school security employees.

A school security employee is an individual who (1) is not an SRO and (2) is employed by a local school system to provide safety and security-related services at a public school.

**State Fiscal Effect:** MCSS advises that, if the intent of the evaluation is to review existing school security measures and identify gaps, it likely can conduct the required study with existing resources, relying largely on existing plans and interviews with school safety personnel in each local school system. However, if the intent is for the evaluation to conduct a more thorough evaluation of weapons-detection strategies, technology, and equipment, MCSS anticipates that it needs to hire a consultant with expertise in that area, resulting in an increase in general fund expenditures in fiscal 2026 and 2027. In the absence of clarity regarding the intent of the bill, general fund expenditures may increase to conduct the evaluation, potentially significantly, but a reliable estimate is not feasible.

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### **Additional Information**

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

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Center for School Safety; Department of Legislative Services

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