

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2026 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**Third Reader - Revised**

House Bill 837

(Delegate Ebersole, *et al.*)

Ways and Means

Education, Energy, and the Environment

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**Education - Student Athletic Activities - Cardiovascular Prescreening**

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This bill requires a physical examination used to determine a student’s physical fitness to participate in an interscholastic sport at a public or certified nonpublic, noncollegiate educational institution to include a free “cardiovascular prescreening” before the student participates in the interscholastic sport, with specified exceptions. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in consultation with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), must adopt regulations to implement cardiovascular prescreening requirements. The bill may not be construed to require a health insurer or health care provider to provide a physical examination or cardiovascular prescreening to a student at no cost. Certified nonpublic, noncollegiate educational institutions must develop policies and programs relating to sudden cardiac arrest as established in current law for public schools. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** MSDE and MDH can adopt regulations on cardiovascular prescreening requirements with existing resources. Revenues are not affected

**Local Effect:** Local school systems can ensure compliance with the cardiovascular screening requirement with existing budgeted resources.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## Analysis

### Bill Summary:

#### *Cardiovascular Prescreening Provisions*

“Cardiovascular prescreening” means a set of questions designed to assess an individual’s heart health, identify risk factors for heart disease, and detect any underlying cardiovascular abnormalities before symptoms appear, including (1) a targeted personal and family history and (2) a physical examination based on nationally recognized, evidence-based guidelines recommended by organizations focused on cardiovascular care in pediatric populations.

A physical examination of a student used to determine the student’s physical fitness to participate in interscholastic sports, including a try-out, practice, or contest of a school team, must include a free cardiovascular prescreening in accordance with the bill. The cardiovascular prescreening must be offered as part of the process the school requires for a physical examination before a student participates in interscholastic sports. A cardiovascular prescreening may not be conducted earlier than one year before the first day of the school year in which the student intends to participate in an interscholastic sport.

A cardiovascular prescreening is not required if the school or local school system does not require a physical examination before a student participates in interscholastic sports or if the cardiovascular prescreening is not available for free.

If a cardiovascular prescreening has a positive finding, the individual administering the screening must notify the student’s parent or guardian and, if the student is at least 18 years old, the student.

#### *Sudden Cardiac Arrest Awareness Provisions*

The bill also requires certified nonpublic, noncollegiate educational institutions to develop policies and programs relating to sudden cardiac arrest as established in current law for public schools. The bill accordingly updates the statutory definition of “youth athlete” to include instances where the youth sports program is conducted at a facility of a certified nonpublic, noncollegiate educational institution.

**Current Law:** Under § 7-402 of the Education Article, MSDE, in consultation with MDH, must adopt regulations requiring a physical examination for children entering the Maryland public school system for the first time. The regulations must require each child to have a physical examination completed within the nine-month period before entering the public school system or the six-month period after entering the public school system.

The physical examination must be completed by a licensed physician, licensed physician assistant, or certified nurse practitioner.

For each school year, each public school must report to the local board of education or LHD the number of children entering the public school system for the first time who have not had a physical examination due to lack of access to health care, insufficient financial resources, or any other reason, including a religious reason, as the public school deems appropriate. The local board of education or LHD must report the information to MDH.

### *Noncollegiate Educational Institutions*

Under § 2-206 of the Education Article, the State Board must issue a certificate of approval to a noncollegiate educational institution (*i.e.*, a school or other institution that offers an educational program but is not an institution of postsecondary education) if certain requirements are satisfied. With the advice of the State Superintendent, the State Board must adopt bylaws, rules, and regulations for the approval and accreditation of all public schools. The board must also establish minimum requirements for issuing certificates and diplomas by public and private noncollegiate educational institutions in the State. A noncollegiate educational institution may not operate in this State without a certificate of approval from the board.

### *Cardiac Arrest Awareness – Generally*

MSDE, in collaboration with MDH, each local board of education, and other experts and stakeholders, must develop and implement a program to provide sudden cardiac arrest awareness to coaches, school personnel, student athletes, and parents.

The sudden cardiac arrest program developed by MSDE must include the nature and warning signs of sudden cardiac arrest and the risks associated with continuing to play or practice after experiencing a symptom of sudden cardiac arrest. The program must include a process to verify that a coach has received information relating to the program.

Before a student enrolled in a public school may participate in an authorized athletic activity, the local board of education must provide a sudden cardiac arrest symptoms and warning signs information sheet to the student and the student's parent or guardian; both must acknowledge the receipt of this sheet by signing a statement. MSDE must create the information sheet and the acknowledgement statement.

MSDE may use materials available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Parent Heart Watch, Sudden Arrhythmia Death Syndromes Foundation, or any other appropriate entity. A public school may hold an informational meeting before the start of each athletic season regarding the symptoms and warning signs of sudden cardiac arrest.

### *Cardiac Arrest Awareness – Information for Participants and Parents or Guardians*

Before an individual participates in an authorized athletic activity on school property, the local board of education must provide, or require that a third party provide (1) information on sudden cardiac arrest to the individual and, if applicable, a parent or guardian of the individual and (2) notice that acknowledgement of the receipt of the information.

The information must be in the form of a separate information sheet, or a notice of the registration form for a youth sports program stating that information on sudden cardiac arrest is available, including directions on how to receive the information electronically. The individual and, if applicable, the parent or guardian of the individual must acknowledge the receipt of the information in a specified manner.

### *Cardiac Arrest Awareness – Youth Athletes and Sports Programs*

A “youth athlete” means an individual who participates in an athletic activity in association with a youth sports program conducted at a public school facility or by a recreational athletic organization.

A “youth sports program” is defined as a program organized for recreational athletic competition or instruction for participants who are younger than 19 years old.

A youth sports program that uses a public school facility must provide annually to the local board of education (or the board’s agent) a statement of intent to comply for all its athletic activities with the requirement to provide participants and parents and guardians with information on sudden cardiac arrest and notice that acknowledgement of the receipt of the information is required. A youth sports program that does not use a public school facility is encouraged to follow the guidelines.

A youth sports program must make available information on sudden cardiac arrest developed by MSDE to coaches, youth athletes, and the parents and guardians of youth athletes. A coach of a youth sports program must review the information.

### *Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association Guidance*

In May 2024, the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association, in consultation with its medical advisory committee, adopted an updated [preparticipation physical evaluation form](#) that incorporates the most current medical guidance related to cardiovascular prescreening, including individual medical history, family medical history, and cardiovascular risk factors. The form includes a section with language directing evaluating medical professionals to “[c]onsider ECG, echocardiogram, and referral to

cardiology if abnormal cardiac history/exam or family history to address Sudden Cardiac Arrest and Sudden Cardiac Death risk.”

**Additional Comments:** Nonpublic schools affected by the bill can likely require cardiovascular prescreening as specified and provide student athletes and their parents or guardians with the required information about sudden cardiac arrest using existing resources.

Although the bill contemplates an exemption from the cardiovascular prescreening requirements for schools and local school systems that do not require a physical examination before a student participates in interscholastic sports, Maryland regulations (COMAR 13A.06.03.02) require a physical examination of students prior to participation in interscholastic sports. It is unknown whether any nonpublic schools do not require a physical exam prior to participation in interscholastic sports.

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### **Additional Information**

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

**Designated Cross File:** SB 593 (Senator Brooks) - Education, Energy, and the Environment.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Department of Health; Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Association of County Health Officers; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Baltimore City Public Schools; Frederick County Public Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools; Prince George’s County Public Schools; St. Mary’s County Public Schools; Wicomico County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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