

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 508 (Senator Carozza)
Education, Energy, and the Environment

Somerset County Board of Education - Alterations

This emergency bill makes several changes to the Somerset County Board of Education. Specifically, the bill (1) requires the board to consist of one nonvoting student member from each public high school in the county; (2) requires the Somerset County Commissioners (rather than the Governor) to fill any vacancies that occur; (3) increases the annual compensation for the board chairman from \$3,000 to \$6,000 and other nonstudent member compensation from \$2,700 to \$5,000; (4) establishes a \$5,000 scholarship award for a student member of the board who completes a full term; and (5) requires closed sessions of the board to adhere with specified provisions of the Open Meetings Act. In accordance with Article III of the Maryland Constitution, increases in compensation do not apply to board members currently serving in a term of office and will only take effect at the start of the term of an individual elected after the effective date of the bill.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: Somerset County expenditures increase by \$13,450 in FY 2027 and by \$22,200 annually beginning in FY 2030. County revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: A student member must meet the following requirements:

- be a 12th grade student in the Somerset County public school system elected by the high school students of the public school that the student attends, in accordance with procedures established by the school system;

- serve for one year beginning July 1 after the election of the member;
- be a nonvoting member; and
- advise the county board on the interests of students.

Unless invited to attend by an affirmative vote of a majority of the county board, the student members may not attend an executive session.

A student member who completes a full term on the board must be granted a scholarship of \$5,000 to be applied toward the student's higher education costs.

Annual Compensation

The bill increases the chairman's salary by \$3,000 annually (from \$3,000 to \$6,000). For all other elected members, the salary is increased by \$2,300 annually (from \$2,700 to \$5,000).

Current Law: The Somerset County Board of Education consists of five nonpartisan elected members and, although not in statute, three nonvoting student members (two regular student members and one alternate student member). The school board is 1 of 20 elected boards in the State; there are also 4 hybrid boards.

Annual Compensation

The chairman of the board receives \$3,000 annually; all other elected members receive \$2,7000 annually. The chairman and other members are entitled to (1) reimbursement for expenses incurred in official duties performed outside Somerset County and (2) \$500 per member per year for expenses incurred in official duties performed within Somerset County.

Vacancies

The Governor must appoint a qualified individual to fill any vacancy on the board for the remainder of the term and until a successor is elected and qualifies.

Closed Meetings

All final actions of the county board must be taken at a public meeting. The board must keep a formal record of each public meeting. This requirement does not prohibit the board from meeting and deliberating in executive session provided that all action is taken at a public meeting.

Open Meetings Act - Closed Sessions (Applies to Somerset County Board of Education upon Enactment)

A public body may not meet in closed session unless at least one member of the body has been designated to receive training on the requirements of the open meetings law. If a designated individual cannot be present at an open meeting at which the public body votes to hold a closed session, the body must complete a specified compliance checklist developed by the Office of the Attorney General and include the checklist in the meeting minutes. If a public body meets in closed session, the minutes for a public body’s next open session must include a summary that includes specified information about the proceedings of the closed meeting.

Local Expenditures: Elected members of the Somerset County Board of Education serve a term of four years beginning on January 1 after the member’s election. Of the five elected members of the board, three are elected in gubernatorial election years and two are elected in presidential election years. Therefore, the next term of office for which the bill’s salary increases will apply begins on January 1, 2027 (halfway through fiscal 2027). By fiscal 2030, all five elected members of the board are subject to the increased salaries specified in the bill for the full fiscal year as shown in **Exhibit 1**.

Exhibit 1
Increased Expenditures for School Board Compensation

	<u>FY 2027*</u>	<u>FY 2028</u>	<u>FY 2029*</u>	<u>FY 2030</u>
Chairman	\$0	\$0	\$1,500	\$3,000
Other Elected Members	3,450	6,900	8,050	9,200
Student Members**	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Total	\$13,450	\$16,900	\$19,550	\$22,200

* Reflects half-year increase for members taking office January 1 in fiscal 2027 and 2029; fiscal 2030 reflects full salary increases for all elected members of the board.

** Reflects a \$5,000 scholarship for two student members to be awarded annually beginning June 30, 2027.

Source: Department of Legislative Services

Additionally, as specified in the bill, each student member serves for one year beginning on July 1 after the election of the member. The bill also requires a student member who completes a full term on the board to be granted a \$5,000 scholarship to be applied toward the student’s higher education costs. As the bill takes effect upon enactment, this analysis

assumes that each student member is elected by the conclusion of the 2025-2026 school year and serves a one-year term beginning July 1, 2026, ending June 30, 2027 (*i.e.*, fiscal 2027).

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: HB 1428 (Delegate Anderson) - Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): Somerset County; Department of Legislative Services

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jg/hlb

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