

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2007 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 566 (Delegate Kaiser, *et al.*)
Ways and Means

Student Health - Maryland School Health Blue Ribbon Panel

This bill establishes a Maryland School Health Blue Ribbon Panel to develop recommendations for a Maryland School Health Action Plan. The panel must study the 2006 Nutrition and Physical Activity Statewide Plan developed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and evaluate the potential impact of specified school health measures. An interim report is due by June 1, 2008 and a final report by June 1, 2009. MSDE and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) must provide staff support for the panel.

The bill takes effect October 1, 2007 and terminates September 30, 2009.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Although some additional costs would be incurred by MSDE and DHMH in their joint role as staff support for the panel, the costs could be absorbed within their existing budgets. State officials appointed to the panel could participate and be reimbursed from existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: Local school personnel appointed to the blue ribbon panel could participate with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: School breakfasts and lunches supported by State and federal funds must meet specific nutritional standards. A public school vending machine that sells foods of

minimal nutritional value must use a timing device to automatically prohibit or allow access to the machine in accordance with nutritional policies established by the local board of education.

With the assistance of the local health department, each school system must provide adequate school health services, instruction in health education, and a healthful school environment. Additionally, each public school must have a program of physical education given in a planned and sequential manner.

Background: Numerous sources state that the percentage of children who are overweight has nearly tripled over the last 20 years. A National Conference of State Legislatures briefing reports that research on student performance and health suggests that academic achievement is positively correlated with nutrition and physical activity.

Optional school nutrition standards were approved by the State Board of Education over a year ago, and MSDE reports that all school systems have adopted the standards. The State board's standards limit the foods that may be sold in elementary and middle school cafeterias and recommend that vending machines in schools be turned off until after the end of the regular school day. MSDE has been visiting all 24 local school systems to see how they have implemented the standards and plans to report its findings to the State Board of Education in April.

According to MSDE, physical education programs in the 24 local school systems can be very different, especially at the elementary school level. For example, some elementary schools provide just 30 minutes of physical education per week, while a small percentage of public elementary schools in Maryland may provide as much as 120 minutes per week. In general, physical education classes for middle and high school students are more frequent, although only one semester of physical education is needed to graduate from a Maryland high school.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: A similar bill, HB 1418 of 2006, passed the House and was amended in the Senate. The House appointed a conference committee to resolve the different versions of the bill, but a Senate conference committee was never appointed.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, National Conference of State Legislatures, Department of Legislative Services

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