

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2018 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 870
Ways and Means

(Delegate Shoemaker, *et al.*)

Public Schools - Agricultural Education Programs

This bill encourages each local board of education to implement an agricultural education program that prepares students for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices related to specified topics and a wide range of opportunities in agriculture-related employment and higher education by providing instruction and developing skills in science, math, technology, communications, leadership, and management through integrated classroom and laboratory instruction, supervised agricultural experiences, and leadership experiences and involvement in student organizations. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2018.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill is directed at local school systems.

Local Effect: None. The bill does not directly affect local school system finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Chapter 230 of 2016 encourages each county board of education, beginning in the 2018-2019 school year, to implement an agriculture science curriculum in at least one public high school in the local school system or career and technology education center in the county. If offered, the curriculum must be selected from existing curricula developed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) or developed by a county board and approved by MSDE.

With the advice of the State Superintendent of Schools, the State Board of Education establishes basic policy and guidelines for the program of instruction for public schools. Subject to State law and the bylaws, policies, and guidelines established by the State Board of Education, each local board of education must establish the curriculum guides and courses of study for schools in its jurisdiction.

According to regulations, each local school system must provide in public schools a comprehensive, multidisciplinary environmental education program infused within current curricular offerings and aligned with the Maryland Environmental Literacy Curriculum. As part of that curriculum, a student must make decisions that demonstrate understanding of natural communities and the ecological, economic, political, and social systems of human communities and must examine how their personal and collective actions affect the sustainability of these interrelated systems.

Background: Chapter 672 of 2012 required the State Board of Education and the University of Maryland Extension, after consultation with local boards of education, specified local agriculture groups, and other organizations that promote education about agriculture, to create a task force by December 31, 2014, to explore options for incorporating the subject of agriculture, including sustainable agriculture and other agriculture issues, in all existing curricular areas. The task force completed a final report in May 2015, when authorization for the task force terminated.

The task force's final report included four recommendations:

- establish a free online interactive venue for students entitled the Maryland Agriculture Academy, which includes multimedia resources and activities;
- provide a curriculum and professional learning resource system for educators on the integrated teaching of agriculture, aligned to Maryland content standards;
- expand the pipeline to agriculture careers and education through elementary and middle school programs; and
- expand the State's rigorous high school agricultural programs of study that lead to postsecondary credit and industry certification as well as increased readiness for entry into college and careers.

The task force identified 51 Maryland public high schools and career and technology centers that currently offer instruction in agricultural science. Of these, 26 offer the Curriculum for Agriculture Science Education (CASE) curriculum, 14 offer district-developed programs, and the remaining 11 schools offer other national programs.

MSDE currently provides three agriculturally related programs of study for use by the county boards of education: CASE; Environmental Studies/Natural Resources; and

Horticultural Services: Certified Professional Horticulturalist. Other locally developed programs of study focusing on agricultural specialties are also offered in many counties. MSDE advises that all but three counties offer at least one agricultural program of study. Allegany, Charles, and Somerset counties no longer offer agriculture due to low enrollments in those programs.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 1065 (Senator Bates) - Rules.

Information Source(s): Charles and Montgomery counties; Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Agriculture; Department of Natural Resources; Department of Legislative Services

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md/rhh

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