

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 14 (Senator Reilly)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Task Force to Study Starting Times for Maryland Public Schools

This bill establishes a Task Force to Study Starting Times for Maryland Public Schools. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must staff the task force. The task force must review the science on the sleep needs of adolescents, including the effects of sleep deprivation on academic performance and the benefits of sufficient sleep; review and study how other school systems have implemented later school day starting times and how various activities in those school systems were impacted and scheduled around the changes; and make recommendations regarding whether public schools should implement a starting time of no earlier than 8:00 a.m. The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 31, 2014.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2014, and terminates December 31, 2014.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs for MSDE are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Public schools must be open for at least 180 days and 1,080 school hours during a 10-month period. However, under certain conditions (a natural disaster, civil

disaster, and severe weather conditions), the State Board of Education may permit a local board of education to make adjustments to the length of the school year and exceptions to the 10-month period limit. In case of emergency, the State Board of Education may open schools on holidays. Local school systems have authority over opening and closing hours for public schools.

Background: A February 2013 study by the Transportation Division of Anne Arundel County Public Schools indicates that several Maryland counties have opening times before 8:00 a.m. for all or some high schools and for several middle schools, but that an opening time before 8:00 a.m. for elementary schools is much less common. The report also discusses the link between bus routes and schedules and school opening and closing times, and indicates that a significant change in opening times may result in substantial additional transportation costs and (assuming the length of the school day is largely unchanged) will reduce after-school hours available to students for athletics, extracurricular activities, employment, additional schooling, and homework.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), sleep loss causes problems with memory and attention, complex thought, motor responses to stimuli, performance in school or on the job, and controlling emotions. NIH also indicates that the amount of sleep that an individual will need each day changes considerably over the course of a lifetime, and reports that the recommended amount of sleep for school-aged children is at least 10 hours per day and 9-10 hours a day for teenagers.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HB 1462 of 2013 passed the House, but received an unfavorable report from the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 20, 2014
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