

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2013 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
Revised

Senate Bill 855

(Senator Getty)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

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**Carroll County - Public Schools - Collection of Biometric Information from  
Students - Prohibited**

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This bill prohibits the Carroll County Board of Education from collecting biometric information from any public school student. The bill defines “collect biometric information” as the noninvasive electronic measurement and evaluation of any physical characteristics that are attributable to a single individual, including fingerprint, vocal, and facial characteristics; and any other physical characteristics used for the purpose of electronically identifying that individual with a high degree of certainty.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** None.

**Local Effect:** The Carroll County Public School System can replace certain palm scanning technology using existing resources.

**Small Business Effect:** To the extent that small businesses sell or distribute devices and systems that would be prohibited from use in the Carroll County Public School System, these businesses will be adversely affected. However, small businesses that sell or distribute alternative devices and systems that are not prohibited may benefit.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** There is no specific prohibition against collection of public school student’s biometric information, as described by the bill.

**Background:** Carroll County Public Schools has implemented in 12 of its schools the use of certain scanning devices that are able to identify unique characteristics of an individual's palm, to help expedite the process of paying for school meals, thus allowing students more time for mealtime. The school system advises that by linking the individualized information to a pre-paid school cafeteria account, the system is more efficient than processing cash transactions and is more accurate than linking a personal identification number (PIN) to each student and having each student enter that number on a keypad. The technology also helps with food inventory planning. Presently parents may opt out of scanner use for their children. However, in response to the privacy concerns of some parents, Carroll County Public Schools advises that it is phasing out its use of the palm scanning devices and plans to use a PIN and keypad system in each of its schools by December 2013.

Certain school surveillance systems may be capable of identifying individuals (including students) with a high degree of certainty through measurement and evaluation, in order to investigate and otherwise respond to violence and other prohibited activities in and near public schools.

**Local Fiscal Effect:** Given the October 1, 2013 effective date of the bill, Carroll County Public Schools will need to accelerate its planned phase-out of the palm scanners, but does not anticipate any resulting increase in expenditures.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

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

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 11, 2013  
mc/rhh Revised - Senate Third Reader - March 25, 2013

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