

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 561
Ways and Means

(Delegate B. Robinson, *et al.*)

Education - Task Force to Study the Suspension of Prekindergarten Students in Public Schools

This bill establishes the Task Force to Study the Suspension of Prekindergarten Students in Public Schools. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must staff the task force. A report with findings and recommendations is due by December 31, 2014.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2014, and terminates May 31, 2015.

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

Bill Summary: The task force must study:

- the number of prekindergarten students suspended in each local school system during the 2013-2014 school year, the 2012-2013 school year, and the 2011-2012 school year;
- the impact of zero-tolerance policies on the rates of suspension of prekindergarten students; and

- the impact of suspension of prekindergarten students on academic performance and student behavior.

The task force must also make recommendations regarding the effectiveness of suspension of prekindergarten students, and the continued use of suspensions of prekindergarten students in public schools.

Task force members may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the standard State travel regulations, as provided in the State budget.

Current Law/Background: In the 2012-2013 school year, 26,402 four-year-olds were enrolled in prekindergarten programs offered by the local school systems. Prince George's County and Baltimore City have the highest prekindergarten enrollments in the State. Most school systems offer half-day prekindergarten, but about 25% of the students are enrolled in full-day prekindergarten. Baltimore City and Kent and Garrett counties offer full-day prekindergarten exclusively, while another seven counties offer both half- and full-day programs.

According to MSDE, during the 2012-2013 school year 83 prekindergarten students were suspended or expelled from a Maryland public school (shown in **Exhibit 1**). Of those, 29 were from Baltimore City and 12 were from Anne Arundel County. The majority of the suspensions or expulsions were for a physical attack on a student (*i.e.*, 31) or a physical attack on a teacher (*i.e.*, 28). That year prekindergarten students were also suspended or expelled for the following reasons: classroom disruption; verbal or physical threats to teachers, staff, or students; fighting; disrespect; insubordination; weapons (other than a gun); and inciting or participating in a disturbance.

MSDE advises that the Maryland State Board of Education has recently published for comment new suspension regulations for prekindergarten through grade 12 that they believe will address the issues raised in this legislation. In addition, State officials have urged local school systems to evaluate discipline on a case-by-case basis and to abandon zero-tolerance practices.

Exhibit 1
Unduplicated Count of the Number of Prekindergarten Students Suspended or
Expelled from a Maryland Public School by County
School Years 2010-2011 through 2012-2013

<u>Local School System</u>	<u>School Year</u>		
	<u>2010-2011</u>	<u>2011-2012</u>	<u>2012-2013</u>
Allegany	0	5	2
Anne Arundel	11	11	12
Baltimore City	29	18	29
Baltimore	15	10	1
Calvert	3	2	2
Caroline	3	1	1
Carroll	4	3	0
Cecil	2	4	3
Charles	4	6	1
Dorchester	3	5	2
Frederick	1	3	2
Garrett	2	0	2
Harford	5	5	2
Howard	0	0	0
Kent	0	0	5
Montgomery	0	3	1
Prince George's	22	9	7
Queen Anne's	0	2	0
St. Mary's	1	2	2
Somerset	3	0	3
Talbot	3	8	4
Washington	0	1	0
Wicomico	2	3	1
Worcester	2	0	1
Total	115	101	83

Source: Maryland State Department of Education

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

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ncs/rhh

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