

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2017 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 866
Ways and Means

(Delegate Arentz, *et al.*)

Primary and Secondary Education - Health and Safety Guidelines and
Procedures - Digital Devices

This bill requires the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), in consultation with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), to develop health and safety guidelines for the use of digital devices in public school classrooms. Beginning in the 2018-2019 school year, each local board of education must implement the health and safety guidelines and procedures for the use of digital devices in public school classrooms specified in the bill.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2017.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. DHMH, in consultation with MSDE, can develop the required health and safety guidelines and procedures to be implemented in every school system using existing resources.

Local Effect: The exact impact on local school systems will be determined by the guidelines and procedures developed by DHMH; however, as discussed below, it is assumed that any costs will be minimal and absorbable within local school system budgets.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: Extended use of computers and other digital devices is associated with certain health hazards including carpal tunnel syndrome, eye strain, and

back problems. Many of these problems can be prevented or alleviated by taking breaks from working at a computer, stretching, and designing ergonomically correct workstations.

State Fiscal Effect: DHMH advises that it must hire a consultant at a cost of \$100,000 in fiscal 2018 to meet the requirements of the bill. The Department of Legislative Services disagrees and advises that DHMH, in consultation with MSDE, can develop the required health and safety guidelines and procedures using existing resources.

Local Fiscal Effect: It is assumed that DHMH will be cognizant of the potential costs when developing the guidelines and procedures since there are many affordable ways to reduce the hazards associated with the extended use of computers and other digital devices such as limiting the amount of time spent working on a device, taking breaks, and stretching. In addition, many design principles of an ergonomically correct workstation can be implemented at minimal expense, such as adjusting monitor heights. Since affordable options are available, it is assumed that DHMH guidelines and procedures will not require local school systems to install fully customizable workstations, which can be very expensive. Thus, it is assumed that any costs will be absorbable within local school system budgets.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 1089 (Senator Hershey, *et al.*) - Rules

Information Source(s): Anne Arundel, Charles, and Montgomery counties; Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; Department of Legislative Services

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