

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2018 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 667 (Senator Robinson, *et al.*)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Education - No-Zero Grading Policy - Prohibition

This bill prohibits a local board of education from establishing a no-zero grading policy. “No-zero grading policy” is defined as a grading policy that does not allow a teacher to issue a zero grade. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2018.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: None. Those local school systems that must revise grading policies can do so with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: According to State regulations, each local school system must develop a written policy on grading and reporting that complies with student record requirements. On October 1 of each school year, each local school system must file its policies on grading and reporting with the State Superintendent of Schools.

Background: Proponents of no-zero grading policies have argued that assigning a zero on a 100-point scale for an assignment that is not submitted on time can quickly result in a course grade that does not properly reflect a student’s knowledge and ability and can reduce student morale, sometimes putting students on a path to failure and dropping out of school. Conversely, non-zero grades can encourage a student to try to recover from poor initial results.

Opponents of no-zero grading policies generally find that the possibility of a zero grade can be a considerable motivator for students to try and to turn in assignments and that zero grades prepare students for an adulthood that does not reward lack of effort and teach students to respect deadlines. A no-zero grading policy, they argue, undermines the importance of a student's work habits, such as class participation, meeting deadlines, and working diligently on assignments.

The Maryland State Department of Education advises that the State Superintendent of Schools has established the High School Graduation Task Force, which is analyzing local grading policies in 2018 and generally studying what courses/content students need prior to moving on to postsecondary education or the workforce.

Local Fiscal Effect: Montgomery and Prince George's County advise that their local school system policies currently allow for zero grades. Baltimore City advises that a zero grade is allowed and encouraged when appropriate on individual assignments but, for grades 6 through 12, there is a minimum course grade of 50 before final exam grades are incorporated to allow a student to improve his/her grade through diligent work in subsequent marking periods in order to pass the course. Baltimore City advises that any changes in policy made under the bill can be handled using existing resources. It is assumed that other school systems that must make policy changes can do so using existing resources.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Baltimore City; Montgomery and Prince George's Counties; Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Legislative Services

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