

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2018 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 998

(Senator Peters, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

State Department of Education - REAL School Gardens Pilot Program -
 Established

This bill establishes the REAL School Gardens Pilot Program within the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to design and build custom outdoor classrooms at public Title I elementary schools and train teachers in the use of outdoor classrooms. The program must be implemented in Baltimore City and Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George’s counties. The Governor must include \$200,000 in the fiscal 2020 State budget for the program. By June 30, 2020, MSDE must hire a third party to study the effectiveness and success of the program’s first year. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2018, and terminates June 30, 2023.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: No effect in FY 2019. General fund expenditures increase by \$280,100 in FY 2020 for the pilot program; out-year expenditures reflect annualization, annual salary increases, and \$40,000 for a program evaluation in FY 2021. Expenditures terminate at the end of FY 2023. No effect on revenues. **This bill establishes a mandated appropriation in FY 2020.**

(in dollars)	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	0	280,100	317,400	280,200	283,100
Net Effect	\$0	(\$280,100)	(\$317,400)	(\$280,200)	(\$283,100)

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: Revenues and expenditures in the four local school systems that are included in the pilot program increase by a total of \$200,000 from FY 2020 through 2023.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: MSDE must administer the program in coordination with REAL School Gardens. By December 31, 2020, MSDE must submit the results of the first-year evaluation to the Governor and General Assembly. In coordination with REAL School Gardens, it must prepare a progress report for the second and third years of the program, which must be submitted to the Governor and General Assembly by December 31 of each year. The progress reports must include a summary of:

- the program's expenditures for the previous fiscal year;
- the program's total expenditures to date;
- the program's impact on student learning; and
- the effectiveness of teachers' use of outdoor classrooms.

Current Law: In June 2017, the Governor signed an [Executive Order](#) establishing Project Green Classrooms to promote outdoor activities and environmental education through schools, in communities, and on public lands to benefit Maryland's young people. The initiative includes agency heads, or their designees, from eight Executive Branch agencies as voting members, and nonvoting advisory members from various nonprofit entities and federal governmental agencies. It is co-chaired by the Secretary of Natural Resources and the State Superintendent, or their designees, and staffed by the Department of Natural Resources.

Background: REAL School Gardens is a nonprofit organization founded in 2007 to assist schools in building outdoor classrooms/gardens and to train teachers to use the classrooms in their curriculum. It works with more than 100 schools in over a dozen school districts, including seven schools in Prince George's County and one in Baltimore City.

Title I is a federal compensatory education program that provides supplemental funding to schools with high concentrations of students from low-income families.

State Fiscal Effect: Although the bill mandates \$200,000 only for fiscal 2020, the bill does not terminate until 2023 and requires ongoing evaluations and progress reports. Therefore, this analysis assumes that expenditures for the program continue through fiscal 2023. It also assumes that the \$200,000 annual funding level for the program is meant for direct services to schools and not for administrative expenses related to the program. Therefore, general fund expenditures increase by \$200,000 annually from fiscal 2020 through 2023 to provide grants to local school systems under the program.

General fund expenditures increase by an additional \$80,076 in fiscal 2020, which accounts for the program beginning with the mandated appropriation in fiscal 2020. This estimate

reflects the cost of hiring a program specialist to oversee the grant program and prepare the annual reports. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses. It assumes a regular, rather than contractual, position because the program spans more than three years. Future year expenditures reflect a full salary with annual increases and employee turnover and ongoing operating expenses.

Position	1
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$74,561
Operating Expenses	<u>5,515</u>
FY 2020 Administrative Expenditures	\$80,076

The bill also requires a third-party evaluation to be conducted by December 31, 2020 (fiscal 2021). The Department of Legislative Services estimates the cost of the evaluation to be approximately \$40,000. Therefore, general fund expenditures increase by an additional \$40,000 only in fiscal 2021.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Prince George's County; Maryland State Department of Education; Public School Construction Program; Department of Budget and Management; Department of Legislative Services

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