

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1028
Ways and Means

(Delegate Queen, *et al.*)

Public and Nonpublic Schools - Electric Retractable Room Partitions - Model
Safety Guidelines and Local Law

This bill authorizes a county governing body to enact a local law to (1) prohibit a school employee from operating an electric retractable room partition under specified circumstances and (2) require that any annual safety review, evaluation, or exercise must include information and demonstrations regarding the safe operation of an electric retractable room partition. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must develop and disseminate model safety guidelines to each local school board. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2020.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. MSDE can develop the required guidelines with existing budgeted resources. No effect on revenues.

Local Effect: None. The bill is authorizing in nature and has no effect on local governmental finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill defines an “electric retractable room partition” as a room partition, divider, curtain, or any other similar device that is opened and retracted by operation of an electric motor.

If a county enacts a local law under the bill, the law may prohibit a school employee from operating an electric retractable room partition unless:

- the partition includes a safety sensor that automatically stops the movement of the partition when a body passes through the sensor;
- no students are present in the school building; or
- the room or area where the partition is located is locked or otherwise free of or inaccessible to students.

Current Law/Background: MSDE's *Emergency Planning Guidelines for Local School Systems and Schools* was last updated in 2017. However, it does not include guidelines for the operation of electric retractable room partitions.

In May 2018, a nine-year-old student at Franconia Elementary School in Fairfax County, Virginia died from head injuries suffered when he was caught between a motorized room partition and a wall in his school gym.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Baltimore City; Baltimore City Public Schools; Prince George's County; Baltimore County Public Schools; *Washington Post*; Department of Legislative Services

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mr/hlb

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