

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 258

(Senator Bailey, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

Public and Nonpublic Schools – Electric Retractable Room Partitions –
Operation Requirements

This bill prohibits an employee of a public or nonpublic school from operating an electric retractable room partition under specified circumstances. Annual safety reviews, evaluations, or exercises 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 and nonpublic school, including publishing them on its website. **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. Local school systems can implement the bill’s requirements with existing budgeted resources. To the extent that local school systems elect to install sensors on their electric partitions, which is one of several methods to comply with the bill, they may incur costs for their purchase and installation. No effect on local revenues.

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.

A public or nonpublic school employee may not operate 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; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Frederick County Public Schools; St. Mary’s County Public Schools; *Washington Post*; Department of Legislative Services

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