

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

House Bill 1128  
Ways and Means

(Delegate Beitzel)

---

Garrett County – Public Schools – Virtual Education Days

---

This bill authorizes the Garrett County Superintendent to order a virtual education day instead of closing a public school in the event of (1) a natural disaster; (2) a civic disaster; (3) inclement weather; or (4) any other event that would otherwise prevent normal school attendance. The superintendent must notify a school principal of the decision to order a virtual education day as soon as possible after making the decision, and a principal who receives such notice must immediately notify the students, parents, and school staff. Virtual education must consist of education services that are as close as practicable to in-person educational services. A school implementing virtual education must make accommodations for students and staff without easy access to the Internet. If a school is ordered to implement virtual education for multiple consecutive school days, the county superintendent must arrange for the continued provision of all normal services required by law, including meal services. The Garrett County Board of Education must adopt a policy to implement virtual education days. **This bill takes effect July 1, 2021.**

---

Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** None.

**Local Effect:** Garrett County public school expenditures may increase to implement virtual education. In addition, the school system may incur additional costs to provide meal services and other educational services when virtual education occurs at a public school for multiple consecutive days. Revenues not affected.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

---

## Analysis

**Current Law:** Public schools must be open for at least 180 days and 1,080 school hours at elementary and middle schools or 1,170 hours at high schools during a 10-month period. However, a local board of education may apply to the State Board of Education for a waiver from these provisions of State law; the application must describe a demonstrated effort by the local board to comply with State law and that the school system calendar included from 3 to 10 days to be used to make up days lost. In response, the State board may permit:

- increases or decreases in the length of the school year;
- exceptions from the 10-month period requirement;
- adjustments in the length of the school day; and
- schools to be open on holidays.

These adjustments may be granted only if normal school attendance is prevented because of natural disaster, civil disaster, or severe weather conditions. After any school system closure, the local school system must notify the State board, within 10 days of reopening, of its plan to make up the missed school days, including the dates of the make-up days. Education funding from the State or local sources may not be reduced if there are fewer than 180 school days in any year because of an approved application to the State Board of Education for a decrease in the length of the school year.

Chapter 13 of 2019 requires each local board of education to set start and end dates each year for public schools in the county, effectively repealing any law prohibiting a local board from beginning or ending its school year before or after a certain date.

**Local Fiscal Effect:** Garrett County public school expenditures may increase to cover the cost of technological resources necessary to deliver virtual instruction as close as practicable to in-person instruction. In addition, the school system may incur increased costs to provide meal services and other educational services when virtual education occurs at a public school for multiple consecutive days. The extent of the additional costs are not known.

In fiscal 2021, Garrett County public schools received \$16,601 in total funding per pupil, which was below the statewide average of \$17,314. Information on [per pupil funding](#) for public schools and [student enrollment](#) for each local school system can be found in the *Local Government Overview* report. A copy of the 2021 report can be found on the Department of Legislative Services [website](#).

## **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Designated Cross File:** SB 676 (Senator Edwards) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 16, 2021

rh/hlb

---

Analysis by: Michael E. Sousane

Direct Inquiries to:

(410) 946-5510

(301) 970-5510