

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2022 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

Senate Bill 856 (Senator Eckardt)  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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Public Schools – Health Services – School Nurses

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This bill requires each local board of education, with the assistance of the local health department (LHD), to provide a full-time registered nurse (RN) in each school. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2022.**

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** None.

**Local Effect:** Expenditures increase by an indeterminate but potentially significant amount in some jurisdictions beginning in FY 2023 for local education agencies (LEAs) and LHDs to hire a full-time RN for each school in the jurisdiction, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** With the assistance of the LHD, each local board of education must provide adequate school health services, instruction in health education, and a healthful school environment. The Maryland State Department of Education and the Maryland Department of Health must jointly develop public standards and guidelines for school health programs and offer assistance to the local boards of education and LHDs in their implementation.

In some jurisdictions, LEAs directly hire and employ school nurses. In other jurisdictions, LHDs hire and employ nurses for public schools and make decisions in consultation with LEAs about how services will be provided. Different LEAs and LHDs employ different mixes of RNs, licensed practical nurses, other certified medical workers, or unlicensed

health staff working under the supervision of an RN (who may be responsible for more than one school).

**Local Expenditures:** To the extent that LEAs or LHDs do not retain one full-time RN at each school, local expenditures increase to hire additional RNs. The exact cost is dependent on the number of additional RNs required to ensure that every school in each jurisdiction has a full-time RN.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median salary for RNs working in educational settings (including those working for nonpublic schools) was \$64,630 as of May 2020. The Maryland Association of County Health Officers advises that the fiscal impact per nurse is likely greater today given the current nursing shortage.

Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) advises that it uses a model where RNs oversee certified nursing assistants at some schools. To provide a full-time RN at all 155 schools, BCPS must hire an additional 72 RNs at a cost of more than \$4.0 million annually. Prince George's County Public Schools advises that the school system requires three additional RNs to provide a full-time RN at each public school, resulting in additional expenditures of approximately \$270,000 annually for salaries, benefits, and additional equipment. St. Mary's County Public Schools advises that it already employs an RN at each school in the county.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Designated Cross File:** HB 1004 (Delegate Valentino-Smith) - Ways and Means.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Health; Maryland Association of County Health Officers; Baltimore City Public Schools; Prince George's County Public Schools; St. Mary's County Public Schools; Talbot County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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