



MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Expanding Opportunity and Unleashing Potential

850 Hungerford Drive ♦ Room 123 ♦ Rockville, Maryland 20850

BILL: HB1028
TITLE: Public and Nonpublic Schools – Electric Retractable Room Partitions – Operation Requirements
DATE: 3/6/2020
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
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The Montgomery County Board of Education (Board) **supports** HB1028 **with amendments**

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) currently is in the process of verifying the inventory of electric retractable room partitions that are in 100 schools to confirm the status and features of each. We know that many do not have a safety sensor as described in the legislation.

MCPS has implemented safety protocols across all schools to ensure safe operation regardless of the specific features of the partition. The current practice for operating the wall requires two staff members, each with a control key, to be standing on opposite sides of the operable wall opening, as follows:

1. Both persons operating the keys must be in a position to view the entire area around the moving wall.
2. Both persons must simultaneously turn and hold the keys during the entire operation.
3. At any point, release of any one of the keys will cause the partition to stop immediately.

MCPS is not aware of any current law in Maryland regulating these partitions. As MCPS is renovating schools, partition doors with the sensor systems are being installed, and the two key operation is still required.

As written, the bill would have an immediate impact on the operations in schools. Currently, in order to accommodate different classes and provide maximum flexibility for student education opportunities, the partitions (especially in gymnasiums) frequently are operated during the instructional day. In order to provide adequate supervision for all students, students may be present in the gymnasiums while the doors are moved, but to ensure safety, students are required to stand on one side of the gymnasium away from the doors.

MCPS recommends the following amendments to the legislation:

- Add (B): No student will ever be permitted to operate any type of electric retractable room partition.
- Rename existing (B) to (C)
- Insert new (C) (2): If the doors are not equipped with the safety sensors as required in (C) (1), partitions with a two-key mechanism that stops the partition immediately if either of the two

keys are released may be operated by two school employees, only if schools develop a written process that requires:

- a. Both persons operating the keys must be in a position to view the entire area around the moving wall;
 - b. Both must simultaneously turn and hold the keys during the entire operation;
 - c. Post instructions to operate the partitions;
 - d. Create a key management plan;
 - e. Develop provisions for maintaining student supervision and safety while doors are in operation; and
 - f. Require that students and other bystanders stand next to a fixed wall at least 15 feet away from the moving room partition.
- Insert as (C)(3): If there is not a safety sensor or two-key mechanism, doors may only be operated when:
- Change existing (B)(2) to be labeled as (C)(3)(a)
 - Change existing (B)(3) to be labeled as (C)(3)(b)

For these reasons, the Board **supports** this legislation **with amendments** and urges a **favorable** report.