



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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HB 83

DATE: January 25, 2021

SPONSOR: Delegate Queen

ASSIGNED TO: Ways and Means

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POSITION: Support

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 unless: (1) no student is present in the building; (2) no student is present in the room where the partition is located and the room is locked and inaccessible to students; or (3) the partition includes a safety sensor that automatically stops the partition if a person crosses the plane between the partitioned rooms. This bill also requires annual safety reviews, evaluations, or exercises which must include information and demonstrations regarding the safe operation of an electric retractable room partition. In addition, House Bill 83 also requires the Maryland State Department of Education to develop and disseminate model safety guidelines to each local school board and nonpublic school, including publishing them on its website.

Montgomery County supports House Bill 83. There have been several child fatalities in the last few decades, with one occurring in Fairfax County several years ago. In 2019, Virginia enacted a similar law prohibiting operation of electronic room partitions under specified circumstances in public schools. New York state also enacted a law in 2001 but included all nonpublic schools and educational institutions as well. Passage of this bill could prevent additional fatalities.

For the foregoing reasons, Montgomery County supports House 83 and respectfully requests a favorable Committee report.