

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2019 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 First Reader

Senate Bill 662 (Senator Miller, *et al.*)
 Budget and Taxation

Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Education Grant
 (Maryland Green Schools Act of 2019)

This bill requires the Governor to provide specified funding to the Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE), increasing from \$300,000 in fiscal 2021 to \$336,600 in fiscal 2025, for the purpose of increasing the number of green schools in the State. Funding is not provided beyond fiscal 2025. An annual evaluation of the impact of this funding must be conducted in calendar 2022 through 2026, and on completion, provided as specified. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2019.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$300,000 in FY 2021, increasing to \$336,600 in FY 2025. The bill has no impact in FY 2020 or beyond FY 2025. **This bill establishes a mandated appropriation in FY 2021 through 2025.**

(in dollars)	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	300,000	309,000	318,500	328,900	336,600
Net Effect	(\$300,000)	(\$309,000)	(\$318,500)	(\$328,900)	(\$336,600)

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: Statewide, local school systems receive as much as \$129,250 in FY 2021 and \$165,000 by FY 2025.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill specifies the dollar amounts that may be used by MAEOE under five particular categories to:

- (1) support professional development, assist with student transportation to and from environmentally focused activities, or support school projects that incorporate specified environmental best practices;
- (2) increase the number of environmental educators in the State who will provide green schools training and assist schools with becoming green schools;
- (3) support statewide green school events;
- (4) conduct an annual evaluation by an independent contractor of the impact of the funds provided under the bill on increasing the number of green schools in the State; and
- (5) create an online application form for a school to apply for funding under the bill.

Exhibit 1 shows funding under the bill by year and category.

Exhibit 1 Funding under the Bill by Fiscal Year and Category

<u>Category</u>	<u>FY 21</u>	<u>FY 22</u>	<u>FY 23</u>	<u>FY 24</u>	<u>FY 25</u>
1	\$129,250	\$149,000	\$155,000	\$161,450	\$165,000
2	125,750	130,000	133,500	137,400	141,600
3	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000
4	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
5	20,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Total	\$300,000	\$309,000	\$318,500	\$328,850	\$336,600

Current Law: Under the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), each local school system must provide a comprehensive, multidisciplinary program of environmental education within current curricular offerings to be taught at least once each in the early, middle, and high school learning years. The purpose of this environmental education program is to enable students to make decisions and take actions that create and maintain optimal relationships between themselves and the environment and to preserve and protect the unique natural resources of Maryland, particularly those of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed.

Through its curriculum, a local school system must seek to allow students to understand and value (1) the diversity and interdependence of the biological and physical environment;

(2) the interdependence between the environment and our health, economy, and culture; and (3) how aesthetic experiences provide insight and enrich interactions with the environment. The local school system curriculum must also seek to allow students to develop and apply their knowledge and skills (1) to protect and sustain environmental quality and (2) at the community level for cooperative action, to protect and sustain the environment.

Background: According to its website, MAEOE (among other activities) manages and operates the Maryland Green Schools and Green Centers Programs. This involves training Green Centers and Green Leaders to support teachers and students to implement sustainable activities, including planting and increasing riparian buffer zones, recycling and reducing school waste, and identifying cost saving energy measures. MAEOE indicates that the program consists of 621 green schools; 42 green centers; and over 200,000 involved students, teachers, and parents. The work of MAEOE is supported by a variety of funders and in-kind sponsors.

MAEOE holds two annual events: The MAEOE Conference is a three-day convening of over 500 environmental educators from across the region for professional development and knowledge sharing and the Maryland Green Schools Youth Summit is a celebration for schools that have successfully met the requirements to become a certified green school.

The bill does not define green schools, but MAEOE's Maryland Green School award program allows a school to demonstrate that by integrating hands-on, inquiry-based instruction, youth are empowered to apply knowledge practically. This entails students who at school, home, and in their communities, are reducing pollution, decreasing waste, increasing habitat, limiting carbon emissions, as well as creating healthy learning and living environments. The program is intended to align with the Maryland Early Literacy curriculum requirements (described above) under COMAR.

The State provides grant funding through the State-aided educational institutions program in the Maryland State Department of Education to nonprofit organizations to support educational activities. The criteria and process for participating in the program are specified in State law. The Governor's proposed fiscal 2020 budget includes \$6.3 million for the program, including funds for five new recipients. MAEOE is not funded through the program.

State Expenditures: As detailed in Exhibit 1, general fund expenditures under the bill increase from \$300,000 in fiscal 2021 to \$336,600 in fiscal 2025. State expenditures are not affected after fiscal 2025. Under the bill, MAEOE manages the Green School Grant funding. MAEOE advises that it will hire additional staff to support the grant activities, presumably using a portion of the funding specified for the categories described in the bill.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) advises that while it is not specifically tasked by the bill with implementation of the program, its staff currently work with MAEOE and it anticipates providing additional technical assistance to MAEOE under the bill; it can do so with existing resources. DNR further advises that the amount designated for the independent evaluation (\$10,000 annually) is not sufficient to produce useful results. The Department of Legislative Services agrees and further notes that the bill may provide funding for existing MAEOE activities, which may allow funds from other categories to be used to support the evaluation. MAEOE also receives funding from other entities that could supplement the State funding under the bill.

Local Fiscal Effect: It is assumed that local school systems will be the beneficiaries of grants under the first category of funding under the bill. Thus, statewide, local school systems receive as much as an additional \$129,250 in fiscal 2021, increasing to \$165,000 in fiscal 2025. Consistent with the purposes set forth under the bill, local school system expenditures for professional development, for student transportation to and from environmentally focused activities, and to support school projects that incorporate specified environmental best practices are either offset or increased by similar amounts.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1366 (Delegate Cain, *et al.*) - Rules and Executive Nominations.

Information Source(s): Baltimore City Public Schools; Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Education; Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Budget and Management; Maryland Department of the Environment; Department of Natural Resources; Montgomery County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 19, 2019
mm/rhh

Analysis by: Scott P. Gates

Direct Inquiries to:

(410) 946-5510

(301) 970-5510