



The Senate Committee on Finance

Budget Bulletin

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June 14th, 2019

SENATE BILL 632: SAFE SCHOOLS ACT

The Safe Schools Act (SB632) was designed to create a safer environment in public schools. The bill requires county boards to conduct annual assessments on safety measures and make upgrades if needed. The bill also requires that audio-ready cameras be installed in special education classrooms around the state.



SB632 KEY FACTS

Introduced: February 15, 2019

Completed Legislative Action: March 9, 2019

Signed by Governor: March 25, 2019

Total Cost: \$7,043,400

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

While most school boards already evaluate the safety of their schools, SB632 formalizes the process and makes such considerations mandatory. The bill requires the boards to conduct annual assessments and make safety upgrades when needed. County school boards must send a report of their findings to the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability. SB632 creates a special revenue account to help schools pay for safety upgrades.

CAMERAS IN CLASSROOMS

The bill also requires video cameras in “self-contained classrooms”, defined in the bill as classrooms which offer predominately special education instruction. The cameras must be able to monitor all areas of the classroom but only need to be on when students are present. The bill requires that written notice be given to parents and school employees informing them that cameras will be in use. The bill specifies that there is no opting out of being filmed by the cameras.

HOW CAN VIDEOS BE USED?

Video recordings remain confidential unless there is an alleged incident where the health, well-being or safety of students has been violated. If an incident is alleged, access to the recordings is given to parents of students, involved school employees, law enforcement, and Department of Health and Human Resources employees.

HOW CAN VIDEOS NOT BE USED?

Parents do not have the right to continuously view classroom video streams. They are only allowed to view footage if they have reasonable suspicion that an incident has occurred. School administrators are not allowed to use the videos for teacher evaluation purposes. Video also cannot be used for the purpose of disciplining students.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Department of Education prepared a fiscal note to estimate the cost of installing cameras in every special education classroom throughout the state. They estimated that 2,717 classrooms in the state would need cameras at an average cost of \$2,600 per classroom for a total of \$7,043,400. While the bill authorizes the creation of a special revenue account to assist schools with installing cameras, it does not specify where the money for the account will come from. Funding for the Safe Schools Act did not make it into the main budget but was instead put in the surplus section in the amount of \$3.5 million. This means that if the state has surplus revenue at the end of the fiscal year, that amount will go into the Safe Schools fund.