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Maryland Center for School Safety

Response to DLS Analyst's Review and Recommendations

Senate Education, Business, and Administration Subcommittee –

January 27, 2020

House Education and Economic Development Subcommittee –

January 22, 2020



Maryland Center for School Safety

A Safer School Begins with You

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NOTE: The Maryland Center for School Safety revised its Response to the Analyst’s Review and Recommendations based on revised budget analysis from the Department of Legislative Services. This version was updated after the hearing in the House Education and Economic Development Subcommittee on January 22, 2020.

Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) appreciates the opportunity to update the Committee on the activities of MCSS and respond to the issues raised and recommendations contained in the operating budget analysis prepared by the Department of Legislative Services (DLS).

Key Observations

2. Low Submission Rate for the SRO Adequate Coverage Plan

Due to the low submission rate of the SRO Adequate Coverage Plan for fiscal 2020, MCSS should brief the committees on the outreach efforts made to ensure awareness of this requirement, whether SRO grant funding has been withheld to noncompliant schools, how many schools have had their grant funds withheld, and the amount of funds withheld.

On September 3, 2019, MCSS completed its Managing for Result (MFR) submission reporting that not all school systems had submitted the required SRO Adequate Coverage plan to MCSS by the July 1, 2019 deadline. MCSS regional staff made numerous outreach efforts to local school systems, which included emails, phone calls, and in-person meetings across the state.

Before the end of September 2019, all required SRO plans were submitted to MCSS. The plans were reviewed by MCSS and compiled into the 2019 SRO Adequate Coverage Report which was submitted as a Joint Chairman’s Report on October 1, 2019. No SRO Grant funds have been withheld as local school system SRO Adequate Coverage plans were all received prior to issuing grant awards.

3. Distribution of Fiscal 2019 School Safety Operating Grants

MCSS should comment on how these funds have been used by local school systems and how the School Safety Grants for schools at risk of hate crimes has been allocated by jurisdiction.

Funds allocated to the local school systems through the FY19 School Safety Evaluation Grant, Hate Bias Crimes Grant, and the Safe School Fund Grant have been used to promote safer and more secure learning environments.

The **FY19 School Safety Evaluation Grant** was used by local school systems to complete mandated school safety evaluations. While some local school systems used staff and internal

employees to complete these evaluations, others used third party vendors to complete these evaluations. Although methods for completing the evaluations differed between jurisdictions, all of the evaluations yielded critical information on school safety and security.

Funds allocated through the **FY19 Safe Schools Fund** grants were used for various public school safety related and security initiatives. Some of the more commonly funded items included:

- Trainings for school staff and School Resource Officers;
- Safety supplies such as stop the bleed kits and AEDs;
- Technology equipment such as digital cameras, radios, security card readers, alert notification systems, and school bus cameras; and
- Outreach materials to educate and inform community members about the various school safety initiatives.

Funds allocated through the **FY19 Hate Bias Crimes Grant** were used to support various school safety initiatives for schools as well as early childhood care centers at risk for hate crimes. These initiatives included:

- Security related training;
- Additional security personnel;
- Security related equipment;
- Security related technology; and
- Other security related facility upgrades.

A breakdown of the allocation of the grants by jurisdiction can be found on Appendix A.

4. Maryland School Safety Tip Line

MCSS should provide the committee with updates regarding the operation of the school safety tip line, the adequacy of current staffing and funding levels, the volume of tips received, and the process for tracking tips and disseminating tip information to partner schools.

MCSS is happy to provide the committee with an update on the School Safety Tip Line. The operation, staffing and funding, and the volume of tips and tracking and disseminating tips follows.

Operation

Tip may be submitted through a phone call, online tip form, and a downloadable smartphone app. Once a tip is submitted by an individual, the tip is received by an expert tip taker in the Maryland Joint Operations Center. Once received, the tip taker then is responsible for triaging the tip to determine the correct response. Any critical, life-threatening, or immediate action tips are classified as “hot” tips. These tips are immediately forwarded to the local school system and

the local 911 center. The local 911 center is then responsible to dispatch a police response when necessary. Tips that are deemed to be less critical are classified as “warm” or “cold” tips and are forwarded to the local school system for follow-up. This may include, but is not limited to contacting the Mental Health Services Coordinators, School Safety Coordinators, school administrators or other personnel as identified by the school system. MCSS staff monitors all tips that are received, and follows up with the proper individuals to close out any tips.

Adequacy of Current Staffing and Funding Levels

The staffing of the tip line is done through the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). Contractual tip processing agents are tasked with monitoring the tip line based on a 12-hour schedule; rotating every two weeks between day and night shifts. Operation of the tip line requires 24/7, 365 coverage of phone and computer platforms. All positions are necessary to ensure that at least one (1) processing agent is on every shift.

The agreement with MEMA in the amount of \$300,000 is to pay salary and fringe for five (5) contractual staff. Facility, operational, and equipment costs are covered by MEMA.

Volume of tips received

As of January 21, 2020, MCSS has received 651 credible tips since the launch of the tip line on October 3, 2018. The top event types are General School Complaint/School Accountability, Assault/Intend to Harm Others, and Bullying/Cyber-Bullying. Data is currently being tracked to identify tip trends throughout the State.

Process for tracking & disseminating tips

Tips are processed and tracked through a tip management software. The schools and local school systems are responsible for receiving and updating a tip once it is received to include status and disposition. If any tips are not updated on a regular basis or in a timely manner, MCSS reaches out to the school or the local school systems. MCSS regional staff members also have contact with School Safety Coordinators about closing tips. MCSS staff monitors all tips and outreach that is performed to ensure that no tip goes without proper follow up.

A Safe Schools Maryland Tip Line video is available on the homepage of MCSS website (safeschoolsmd.org). The video has been very helpful in getting the tip line information out to the public.

In order to demonstrate the efficacy of the School Safety Tip Line, DLS recommends that the committees adopt narrative requesting that MCSS include tip-line statistics in their annual MFR submission.

MCSS concurs.

Operating Budget Recommended Actions

1. Add the following language to the general fund appropriation:

, provided that \$100,000 of this appropriation within the Maryland Center for School Safety may not be expended until the center submits a report to the budget committees detailing the allocation of the School Resource Officer (SRO) Grant for fiscal year 2020, the identification of local school systems who have failed to submit an SRO Adequate Coverage Plan, and the respective SRO Grant funds withheld from each noncompliant school. The report shall be submitted by September 1, 2020, and the budget committees shall have 45 days to review and comment. Funds restricted pending the receipt of a report may not be transferred by budget amendment or otherwise to any other purpose and shall revert to the General Fund if the report is not submitted to the budget committees.

MCSS respectfully disagrees.

Reporting requirements for this mandate have been met. MCSS received an SRO Adequate Coverage Plan from all 24 local school systems prior to October 1, 2019. MCSS submitted the SRO Adequate Coverage Report on these plans to the Governor and the General Assembly as mandated by the Safe to Learn Act of 2018, on October 1, 2019. Additionally, the School Safety Subcabinet submitted the Annual Report on the Centers activities to the Governor and the General Assembly on December 15, 2019 as required by the Safe to Learn Act of 2018.

2. Adopt the following narrative:

School Safety Tip Line Performance Measures: Operating out of the Maryland Emergency Management Agency headquarters, the Maryland School Safety Tip Line is a 24/7 anonymous tip line for citizens to report concerns such as a threat to a school, bullying in a school, or mental health. Performance measures for this program are not currently reported as part of the Maryland Center for School Safety's (MCSS) Managing for Results (MFR) submission. The committees request that MCSS demonstrate the volume of calls received each year by event type, along with the closure rate, as part of their annual MFR submission.

MCSS concurs.

Appendix A

Jurisdiction	FY19 Safe Schools Fund Grant	FY19 School Safety Evaluation Grant	FY19 Hate Bias Crimes Grant
Allegany	\$256,019	\$38,897	\$0
Anne Arundel	\$737,388	\$224,540	\$59,298
Baltimore City	\$723,197	\$272,277	\$195,744
Baltimore County	\$935,426	\$307,638	\$266,929
Calvert	\$303,275	\$44,201	\$0
Caroline	\$237,569	\$17,680	\$0
Carroll	\$364,182	\$70,721	\$0
Cecil	\$299,743	\$56,577	\$0
Charles	\$374,576	\$68,953	\$0
Dorchester	\$230,947	\$21,216	\$0
Frederick	\$473,573	\$120,226	\$0
Garrett	\$224,741	\$21,216	\$0
Harford	\$445,268	\$95,474	\$0
Howard	\$568,642	\$136,139	\$0
Kent	\$212,939	\$8,840	\$0
Montgomery	\$1,248,757	\$369,519	\$448,517
Prince George's	\$1,059,034	\$365,983	\$0
Queen Anne's	\$250,495	\$26,520	\$0
Somerset	\$218,944	\$17,680	\$0
St. Mary's	\$317,217	\$49,505	\$0
Talbot	\$230,161	\$15,912	\$0
Washington	\$346,686	\$79,562	\$0
Wicomico	\$297,075	\$45,969	\$0
Worcester	\$243,392	\$24,752	\$0
Total	\$10,599,245	\$2,500,000	\$970,488

Grant	Total Available	Total Awarded
FY19 Safe Schools Fund Grant	\$10,600,000	\$10,599,245
FY19 School Safety Evaluation Grant	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000
FY19 Hate Bias Crimes Grant	\$1,000,000	\$970,488
Total	\$14,100,000	\$14,069,733