

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1035  
Ways and Means

(Prince George's County Delegation)

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Prince George's County Juvenile Court and School Safety Workgroup -  
Continuation, Membership, and Duties  
PG 305-14

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This bill extends, from December 31, 2014, to December 31, 2015, the termination date for the Prince George's County Juvenile Court and School Safety Workgroup. The bill also alters membership requirements and alters the duties of the workgroup by requiring it to develop recommendations on other relevant issues determined by the workgroup to warrant further review, study, or change. The workgroup must report its findings, action plan, and recommendations to the Prince George's County Delegation by December 15, 2014.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** The Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) can continue staffing the workgroup using existing budgeted resources. Any expense reimbursements for task force members are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing resources.

**Local Effect:** Prince George's County can handle the bill's requirements using existing budgeted resources.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** Chapter 677 of 2013 established the Prince George's County Juvenile Court and School Safety Workgroup, which is staffed by DJS. The workgroup was required to:

- review and analyze school arrest and referral data collected by DJS and the Prince George's County School System and based on that data, identify the most common offenses for which students are arrested and referred to juvenile court;
- recommend interagency policies to reduce the number of school-based arrests and referrals for certain misdemeanor offenses to DJS and the juvenile court by diverting more youth to school- and community-based programs, with the goal to decrease the overrepresentation of African American youth in the juvenile justice system;
- recommend strategies to more fully use current resources and expand school- and community-based support services for youth who exhibit behavior problems in school;
- recommend a criteria-based, decisionmaking process for referring students to school- or community-based programs and services instead of to the juvenile justice system for misdemeanor-type delinquent acts involving offenses identified by the workgroup;
- recommend criteria for diversion programs developed for juveniles who have been charged with less serious delinquent acts and who the juvenile court believes would benefit from community alternatives instead of probation or commitment to DJS;
- hold at least two public meetings before October 1, 2013, during which the workgroup seeks testimony from the public and juvenile advocacy groups; and
- develop a collaborative action plan to reduce the number of school-based arrests and referrals to the juvenile court.

The workgroup was required to report its findings, action plan, and recommendations to the Prince George's County Delegation by December 15, 2013, and its report was issued on that date. The report noted that the workgroup met numerous times in 2013 in order to conduct an in-depth examination of current community resources and the existing youth diversion mechanisms in the county. The report included a draft collaborative action plan, which was modeled after similar national initiatives. The proposed plan established objective criteria to amend current school-based arrest practices and provide consistent responses to student behaviors. The plan sets forth an amended diversion mechanism to reduce formal referrals to DJS for certain identified offenses while expanding the utilization of diversion services. The plan also sets forth recommended diversion program criteria and criteria for tracking diversion referral outcomes.

## **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts), Department of Juvenile Services, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 10, 2014  
ncs/kdm

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