

HOUSE BILL 2344

By Bricken

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 12
and Title 49, relative to school safety.

WHEREAS, due to the alarming rise in school violence incidents, including those at after-school events, bolstering school safety for Tennessee students and communities is of paramount concern; and

WHEREAS, recent threats and concerns highlight the need for proactive steps to prevent violence and ensure secure learning environments; and

WHEREAS, providing schools with appropriate and flexible security tools can deter potential threats and contribute to a safer learning atmosphere for students and staff, both during school hours and at after-school events; and

WHEREAS, while existing security measures play a vital role, walk-through metal detectors offer a flexible and adaptable tool to empower schools to strategically address specific security threats during both in-school and after-school hours; and

WHEREAS, studies have shown a significant reduction in weapon-related violence in schools with metal detectors, highlighting their effectiveness as a visible deterrent and contributor to a safer learning environment; and

WHEREAS, providing walk-through metal detectors to LEAs will allow school administrators to triage and prioritize security needs, deploying the detectors as needed for heightened security situations, special events, or specific after-school activities. This tailored approach will allow LEAs to make informed decisions based on their unique circumstances, combining the security of metal detectors with the flexibility to meet diverse school safety challenges; and

WHEREAS, it is the intent of this act that this State will pay to provide the full cost of these units, including shipping, delivery, onsite installation, training, and manufacturer's warranty. It is the intent of this act that the maximum price to be paid for a walk-through metal detector under this act is seventeen thousand dollars; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 6, is amended by adding the following as a new part:

49-6-8201. Short title.

This part is known and may be cited as the "Protecting Tennessee Schools and Events Act."

49-6-8202. Definitions.

As used in this part, unless the context requires otherwise:

(1) "Deployment" means the strategic placement and use of walk-through metal detectors by an LEA, in accordance with this part and applicable rules;

(2) "Heightened security situation" means a circumstance or event that poses a credible or perceived threat to the safety or security of students, staff, parents, visitors, or school property, as determined by the LEA's administration or law enforcement officials;

(3) "Maintenance" means the regular inspection, testing, repair, and upkeep of walk-through metal detectors to ensure their proper functioning and compliance with manufacturer's specifications;

(4) "School events" means extracurricular activities, athletic competitions, or other gatherings officially organized or sanctioned by an LEA and held on school grounds or at other locations designated by the LEA, whether occurring during or after regular school hours;

(5) "Training" means the instruction and guidance provided to school personnel on the proper and effective use of walk-through metal detectors, including, but not limited to, safety procedures, detection techniques, and interaction with students and the public; and

(6) "Walk-through metal detector" means an electronic device designed to detect the presence of concealed metallic objects on individuals passing through its portal and that is equipped with advanced safety features to maximize security while ensuring student well-being and privacy.

49-6-8203. Walk-through metal detectors, provision and specifications.

(a) Subject to appropriation of funds, this state shall provide LEAs with the lesser of one (1) walk-through metal detector for each school in the LEA or three (3) walk-through metal detectors for the entire LEA.

(b) The specifications for walk-through metal detectors that may be provided to an LEA pursuant to subsection (a) must include:

(1) Configurability to handle various traffic densities. In a single lane with one (1) operator, the walk-through metal detector must continuously scan up to thirty (30) people per minute and one thousand eight hundred (1,800) people per hour;

(2) Walk-through capability without a top arch;

(3) Lanes that are wide enough to accommodate foot traffic and mobility assistance devices such as wheelchairs and powered chairs;

(4) A system that activates a customizable alarm system, including both indicator lights and audible sounds when detecting a threat. The alarm must initiate immediately prior to a person's full exit from the designated scanning zone;

(5) A multi-zone light array that activates when a threat is detected isolating the object's location. The lights must be designed for clear visibility in both bright and low-light environments;

(6) Customizable audible alerts, including adjustable volume levels and a selection of distinct alert sounds suitable for different threat levels and environments, to notify school staff of detected threats;

(7) Adjustable sensitivity thresholds for metal volume detection allowing for security personnel to tailor the screening process based on specific needs and risk assessments, optimizing detection accuracy and efficiency while minimizing false alarms;

(8) The capability to operate independently without requiring any external devices such as tablets, smartphones, or other peripherals for monitoring or displaying scan results. All necessary monitoring and display capabilities must be integrated within the walk-through metal detector;

(9) Be mounted on a mobile base with four (4) lockable wheels and balanced weight distribution, designed for one-handed maneuverability by a single person using a push-pull method with minimal physical exertion. The walk-through metal detector must be capable of being easily moved through standard doorways and across various terrains without disassembly;

(10) Have an ingress protection rating of IP55 or higher pursuant to the rating system established by the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), or an equivalent rating for water resistance, and be protected against water projected from a nozzle and water splashing from any direction. The walk-through metal detector must be capable of being operated outdoors in light rain or occasional water splashes without requiring a cover;

(11) Include a rechargeable battery allowing for no less than six (6) hours of continuous operation of the walk-through metal detector between charges;

(12) A fully detachable design with a maximum of four (4) distinct components; and

(13) Be engineered to integrate seamlessly with a dedicated travel case designed specifically for safe and efficient transport across various locations.

Travel cases are not a required accessory but must be available for purchase.

49-6-8204. Procurement, preferences.

(a) The department of education shall contract with a vendor to supply walk-through metal detectors that meet or exceed the minimum specification requirements described in § 49-6-8203(b) to LEAs in the quantities stated in § 49-6-8203(a).

(b)

(1) The department shall use a competitive procurement process, as described in title 12, chapter 3, part 5, to satisfy the requirements of subsection (a).

(2) In selecting a vendor, the department shall comply with the requirements of the Tennessee Minority-Owned, Woman-Owned, Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned, Business Owned by Persons with Disabilities, and Small Business Procurement and Contracting Act, compiled in title 12, chapter 3, part 11.

(3) Notwithstanding another law to the contrary, the department shall select a vendor who demonstrates expertise in secure data collection, analysis, and reporting, particularly within the educational context. The vendor must possess established practices for ensuring data anonymization and student privacy protection.

(c)

(1) In awarding a contract for the provision of walk-through metal detectors, the department shall prioritize the selection of a proposal to supply walk-through metal detection systems that:

(A) Are capable of evolving; and

(B) Designed for future expansion, offering seamless activation of additional features as security needs and technologies advance, maximizing long-term investment, and ensuring sustainable security growth.

(2) The department shall use the following specifications to evaluate the extent to which metal detection systems meet the criteria described in subdivision (c)(1):

(A) The system's ability to integrate an artificial intelligence (AI) powered camera array capable of accurately detecting exposed weapons within its field of view in order to provide an additional layer of security beyond metal detection, enhancing threat identification and proactive response protocols;

(B) The ability to extend the system's exposed weapon detection capabilities to the facility's existing camera system, leveraging existing infrastructure for cost-effective expansion of security coverage and elimination of the need for additional camera installations, minimizing implementation complexity;

(C) The ability to continuously upgrade the software algorithm employed for exposed weapon detection throughout the system's lifespan

to ensure adaptability to evolving threat profiles and emerging weapon technologies, safeguarding against future security vulnerabilities;

(D) The ability to readily upgrade the system's core weapon detection software to incorporate new threat profiles and detection models as they become available to ensure uninterrupted effectiveness against evolving security threats;

(E) The system's ability to accurately identify individuals who are not authorized to be present in the monitored location in order to provide early warning of potential security breaches and enable swift response to unauthorized access attempts;

(F) The system's ability to seamlessly integrate with existing door control systems, enabling automated locking and unlocking functions based on security alerts and access authorization to ensure coordinated physical access control, preventing unauthorized entry and streamlining the entry and exit process for authorized individuals;

(G) The incorporation by the system of a barcode or QR code scanning protocol that is compatible with various ID formats for efficient identification of individuals entering the facility to enable rapid verification of IDs, streamlining visitor check-in processes, and personnel identification;

(H) The inclusion in the system of integrated badge printing capabilities to generate custom badges that include information such as names, photos, access levels, and expiration dates for individuals entering the facility to facilitate visitor management, temporary access control, and visual identification of authorized personnel;

(I) The ability to integrate the system with a non-contact, accurate, and reliable thermal temperature scanning device that provides for initial health screening of individuals entering the facility and gives clear visual or auditory alerts for elevated temperature readings to enable the identification of individuals with elevated temperatures, potentially indicating health risks;

(J) The incorporation into the system of a secure mechanism that complies with all applicable laws and privacy rules to screen individuals against state or national sex offender registries thereby providing an additional layer of protection for vulnerable populations, preventing unauthorized access by registered sex offenders;

(K) The system's ability to provide a comprehensive visitor screening and check-in system, including visitor registration and credentialing, background check capabilities, if applicable, and automated visitor log maintenance to streamline visitor management processes, enhance security, and maintain accurate records of visitor activity;

(L) The system's ability to transmit customizable, real-time alerts to authorized personnel via secure cloud connectivity, which employs industry-standard security protocols to safeguard sensitive data and prevent unauthorized access, thereby enabling immediate notification of security events, such as unauthorized access attempts, weapon detection, or health screening alerts;

(M) The system's ability to incorporate multiple cameras strategically positioned to capture comprehensive views of individuals

being scanned to provide more detailed information for security analysis, threat identification, and potential incident investigation;

(N) The system's capability to function autonomously, conducting security scans and initiating appropriate responses without requiring constant human supervision to enable efficient resource allocation and uninterrupted security operations, particularly during periods of limited staffing or after-hours events;

(O) The system's ability to provide authorized operators with real-time visibility into its operational status and alarm status directly from their mobile phones to empower immediate response to security alerts and proactive maintenance of system functionality, ensuring continuous security coverage;

(P) The system's ability to facilitate the extraction of detailed statistical data, including visitor counts, scan numbers, alarm rates, detection setting configurations, correlations between detection settings and alarm rates, and threats detected during specific timeframes to enable districts to track security trends, evaluate system performance, optimize settings, and inform future security strategies; and

(Q) The system's ability to seamlessly integrate with student attendance tracking systems, enabling students to scan their IDs upon entering the school to automatically record their attendance to streamline daily attendance procedures, reduce administrative workload, and provide accurate attendance data for analysis and reporting.

49-6-8205. Special contract terms, implementation.

(a) It is the intent of this part that the department shall enter a contract pursuant to § 49-6-8204(a) as soon as practicable and that the selected vendor begins delivering, installing, and setting-up the walk-through metal detectors in each LEA within one hundred eighty (180) days of this act's effective date. It is further the intent of this part that all delivery, installation, and set-up of the walk-through metal detectors is completed no later than three hundred sixty-five (365) days after this act's effective date.

(b) The contract made pursuant to § 49-6-8204(a) must require that the vendor:

(1) Provide clear guidelines for schools to operate the walk-through metal detectors effectively, address false alarms appropriately, and ensure student privacy during screenings; and

(2) Provide clear and comprehensive training and guidelines for school personnel and security officers. This training must encompass:

(A) Effective operation of the metal detectors to maximize security efficacy;

(B) Appropriate response protocols for handling false alarms, minimizing disruption, and ensuring efficient system operation; and

(C) Consistent implementation of procedures to guarantee student privacy throughout all screening processes.

49-6-8206. Strategic deployment of walk-through metal detectors.

(a) Subject to subsection (b), each LEA has the discretion and autonomy to determine the strategic deployment of walk-through metal detectors that are provided to the LEA pursuant to this part based on the LEA's unique security needs, risk assessments, and specific school safety plans. The department may provide guidance and resources to assist LEAs in developing effective deployment strategies.

(b) An LEA may utilize a walk-through metal detector in the following locations and situations:

(1) School entrances and exits;

(2) Classrooms or school buildings during special events, athletic competitions, or other gatherings identified as needing additional security measures; and

(3) Random security checks, conducted in a fair and equitable manner, to deter potential threats and maintain a safe learning environment.

(c) An LEA's decision on the deployment of a walk-through metal detector should prioritize the safety and well-being of students, staff, and all participants at school events while balancing the need for a dignified and respectful learning environment.

49-6-8207. Third-party data collection and reporting.

(a) The department is authorized to engage a qualified third-party vendor to collect and analyze data related to the implementation and effectiveness of the use of walk-through metal detectors pursuant to this part.

(b) The data collection must focus on aggregate trends and outcomes and comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. 1232g); § 10-7-504; the Data Accessibility, Transparency, and Accountability Act, compiled in chapter 1, part 7 of this title; and all other relevant privacy laws. This may include, but is not limited to:

(1) Total number of metal detector activations per school;

(2) Categorization of detected items, such as weapons or contraband;

(3) Intervention rates by school personnel and law enforcement following activations;

(4) Overall trends in reported incidents and disciplinary actions involving prohibited items; and

(5) Qualitative feedback from schools and stakeholders on perceived changes in safety and school climate.

(c) A vendor who is engaged pursuant to subsection (a) shall submit quarterly reports to the department summarizing key data findings and trends. The department shall compile the quarterly reports into an annual report to be submitted to the education committee of the senate and the education administration committee of the house of representatives. The department's annual report must include:

(1) A clear overview of the quarterly reports;

(2) Analysis of the program's overall effectiveness in enhancing school safety and security;

(3) Identification of any challenges or areas for improvement; and

(4) Recommendations for legislative or programmatic adjustments to optimize the program's efficacy.

49-6-8208. LEAs may purchase additional walk-through metal detectors.

This part does not prohibit LEAs from purchasing additional walk-through metal detectors directly from the vendor. LEAs may choose to allocate additional resources for the program, such as purchasing more detectors or implementing complementary security measures.

SECTION 2. This act is not an appropriation of funds, and funds must not be obligated or expended pursuant to this act unless the funds are specifically appropriated by the general appropriations act.

SECTION 3. The headings to sections, parts, and chapters in this act are for reference purposes only and do not constitute a part of the law enacted by this act. However, the

Tennessee Code Commission is requested to include the headings in any compilation or publication containing this act.

SECTION 4. This act takes effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.