

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

BILL NO. Senate Bill 971

PRINTER NO. 1728

AMOUNT

No Fiscal Impact

FUND

General Fund

DATE INTRODUCED

October 31, 2023

PRIME SPONSOR

Senator Coleman

DESCRIPTION

Senate Bill 971 establishes a new Section 1303.2-A (Parental Notification of Weapon Incidents) in the Public School Code to require a school entity to notify parents, guardians and school employees of incidents involving possession of a weapon on school property that constitutes a violation of state law or school entity policies.

The legislation requires the notification to be made to parents within 24 hours of an incident involving possession of a weapon unless the circumstances of the incident necessitate otherwise. It also requires the notification to be made using a method of communication likely to reach parents, guardians and school employees.

The legislation allows notification to parents and guardians of students enrolled in or attending, or school employees assigned to a school building where the incident involving possession of a weapon occurs unless an incident occurs at a school building that shares a campus with other school buildings. If the school building shares a campus with other school buildings, the notification is required to be made to parents and guardians of students enrolled in or attending, or school employees at any building on the shared campus.

The legislation requires that if the incident involving possession of a weapon occurs at a school-sponsored activity or in a public conveyance providing transportation to or from school or a school-sponsored activity the notification must reach the appropriate population of parents, guardians and school employees. It provides that notification is not required if the incident is not directly related to the school-sponsored activity or the students and staff involved in the activity.

The legislation provides that a school employee to whom a student in possession of a weapon is assigned is a school official with a legitimate interest in the student and requires the school entity to notify the school employee of the student's identity and the student's records relating to the incident.

Senate Bill 971 provides that nothing in the legislation shall be construed to: (1) limit a school entity's responsibility to report incidents involving possession of a weapon to law enforcement prior to providing required notification; (2) in an emergency, limit a school entity's responsibility to follow its disaster response and emergency

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management plan; and (3) supersede or preempt any provision of a collective bargaining agreement.

The legislation prohibits notification to parents, guardians and school employees from including personally identifiable information.

The legislation defines a "school entity" as an area career and technical school, charter school, cyber charter school, nonpublic school, private school, regional charter school or school district.

The legislation is scheduled to take effect in 60 days.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The enactment of Senate Bill 971 will have no fiscal impact on Commonwealth funds. The cost to school entities to comply with the provisions requiring notification to parents, guardians and school employees related to incidents involving possession of a weapon should be minimal as schools have established processes to provide timely notifications to parents, guardians and school employees.