

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

BILL NO. Senate Bill 1207

PRINTER NO. 1753

AMOUNT

See Fiscal Impact

FUND

General Fund

DATE INTRODUCED

June 21, 2024

PRIME SPONSOR

Senator Aument

DESCRIPTION

Senate Bill 1207 establishes a new Section 1322-B (Cell Phone Lockable Bag Pilot Program) in the Public School Code to provide for a grant to cover the cost of purchasing secure cell phone lockable bags.

The legislation requires the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), within 90 days of the effective date of the legislation and subject to the availability of funds, to award grants to successful applicants and ensure the grant funding is geographically dispersed across the Commonwealth.

The legislation requires a school entity that participates in the program to create a policy that prohibits the use of cell phones during school time and employs the use of cell phone lockable bags. It requires a school entity’s policy to provide exemptions for students with documented medical conditions that necessitate use of the phone. It also requires a school entity’s policy to be posted on its publicly accessible internet website.

The legislation requires a school entity that participates in the program to track changes over the course of two years in student mental health incidents involving bullying, incidents of violence and academic performance and to submit the information to PCCD. It requires PCCD to develop a uniform reporting method for a school entity to track each of the metrics.

The legislation requires PCCD to submit a report on the program to the Governor and the General Assembly using data submitted by the participating school entities to PCCD. It prohibits the report from containing any identifiable information regarding students.

The legislation provides that any information submitted by a school entity as part of the program, the disclosure of which would be reasonably likely to result in a substantial and demonstrable risk of physical harm to the personal security of the students or staff, shall remain confidential and not be subject to the Right-to-Know Law. It allows for PCCD to release aggregate data at its discretion.

The legislation defines a “cell phone lockable bag” as a reusable, secure case, pouch or bag that has a locking mechanism and can be used to store cell phones and other

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smart devices. It defines "school entity" as a school district, intermediate unit, area career and technical school, charter school, regional charter school approved private school, nonpublic school, charter school for the education of the deaf or blind or approved private school.

The legislation is scheduled to take effect in 60 days and will expire December 1, 2026.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The enactment of Senate Bill 1207 will have no fiscal impact on Commonwealth funds. Funding for grants to school entities to cover the cost of purchasing secure cell phone lockable bags will be dependent on appropriations made by the General Assembly in the General Appropriation Act. In addition, PCCD has indicated that it can accommodate the cost of administering the program within its general government operating budget. For information purposes, PCCD's general government operating budget in Fiscal Year 2023-24 is \$23,583,000.