

**Commission on Local Government**

**Estimate of Local Fiscal Impact**

2019 General Assembly Session

**Bill:** HB1729

**Patron:** Landes

**Date:** 1/21/2019

In accordance with the provisions of §30-19.03 of the Code of Virginia, the staff of the Commission on Local Government offers the following analysis of the above-referenced legislation:

**Bill Summary:**

School counselors; staff time. Requires each school counselor employed by a school board in a public elementary or secondary school to spend at least 80 percent of his staff time during normal school hours in the direct counseling of individual students or groups of students.

~~~~~

**Executive Summary:**

Localities have evaluated a negative fiscal impact ranging from \$0.00 - \$1,100,000.00. Localities noted that the bill would likely require hiring additional school counselor, and the cost would be related to the salary and fringe benefits. Some localities noted that they are unable to determine the cost because additional clarification is needed regarding the definition of "direct counseling". Other localities noted that they already use a per student method for the time allocation of guidance/school counselor, but making a specific requirement could reduce local staffing flexibility for principals, and lead to additional staffing cost. An additional locality noted that the bill would have minimal fiscal impact and require adjustment of procedures, policies, and schedules.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Local Analysis:**

**Locality:** City of Danville

**Estimated Fiscal Impact:** \$398,049.00

Per Danville Public Schools: We are already being required to respond to this in that Guidance Counselors are no longer allowed to be the testing coordinators for their site. In response, we are including a request for 6 additional Instructional Technology Resource Teachers (ITRTs) in our FY20 budget. The cost of this will be \$398,049

~~~~~

**Locality:** City of Harrisonburg

**Estimated Fiscal Impact:** \$0.00

Unable to estimate financial impact. The wording in the bill is not very clear. For example, it says "spend at least 80 percent of his staff time in direct counseling." Are females exempt? What constitutes direct counseling? Does this include small or large group counseling in addition to one-on-one counseling? Does this include classroom lessons that are taught by counselors? We understand the intent of the bill, but think that it is important for the bill to be more specific so that school divisions can determine what constitutes the 80 percent.

~~~~~

**Locality:** City of Newport News

**Estimated Fiscal Impact:**  
\$1,100,000.00

Would require potential additional of fifteen (15) positions at salary and fringe benefits to accomplish direct and sole counseling of 80% staff time during school hours to accomplish bill requirement

**Locality:** City of Norfolk

**Estimated Fiscal Impact:** \$0.00

This bill is expected to have minimal fiscal impact. There is the potential for adjustments to procedures, policies, and schedules.

**Locality:** City of Virginia Beach

**Estimated Fiscal Impact:** \$0.00

Deriving true costs for this bill would require an audit of the daily time spent by each counselor in the system. Right now, the Virginia Beach City Public Schools uses a per student method for the allocation of guidance/school counselors. Our rate is one per school, with an additional .20 for every 100 students above 500 in a school at the elementary level, 1 per school for every 300 students, and a second for every 350 after the initial 300 at the middle school level, and the same rate - 1 per school for every 300 students, and a second for every 350 after the initial 300 at the high school level. VBCPS also recently funded 12 additional high school counselors (one per school).

**Locality:** Fairfax County

**Estimated Fiscal Impact:** \$0.00

The Fairfax County Public School system currently has internal guidelines recommending the percentage of time that school counselors spend providing direct services to students which do align with this legislation. However, principals or their designees do currently have the flexibility to vary from these guidelines and utilize counselors for non-school counseling duties based on the needs of a particular building. Making this a specific requirement would reduce local staffing flexibility for principals, which depending on the mix of personnel in their building, could require additional positions at additional local cost

**Locality:** Rappahannock County

**Estimated Fiscal Impact:** \$150,000.00

This fiscal analysis is completely dependent on the definition of "direct counseling." The local Superintendent of our schools (Rappahannock County, ADM~850) suggests that if "direct counseling" includes "academic/career planning, admissions work, and profile of a graduate planning (career coaching)" the fiscal impact would be limited and at least our locality could absorb the impact (FI = \$0).

However, if "direct counseling" is limited to mental health or trauma, the fiscal impact would be magnified and would likely require two new employees for our small jurisdiction and requisite training leading to a fiscal impact of approximately \$150,000 per year.

We strongly suggest making clear the definition of "direct counselling."