

Commission on Local Government

Estimate of Local Fiscal Impact

2023 General Assembly Session | 01/09/23

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 legislation impacting local governments.

SB 856: Public elementary and secondary schools; comprehensive school counseling program. (Patron: Senator Lionell Spruill, Sr.)

Bill Summary: Public elementary and secondary schools; comprehensive school counseling program; development and implementation. Requires each local school board to develop and implement a written plan for a comprehensive school counseling program for the purpose of providing support that meets the mental and emotional health needs of all students and guiding students in academic progress, postsecondary planning, and social-emotional learning. The bill requires each local school board to develop and implement such written plan by the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year.

Local Fiscal Impact: **Net Additional Expenditure:** X **Net Reduction of Revenues:**

Summary Analysis:

Number of Localities Responding: 3 Cities, 3 Counties, 3 Towns, 1 Other

Localities estimated a negative fiscal impact ranging from \$0 to \$15 million over the biennium.

Localities identified the bill's fiscal impact as the recurring increase in expenditures in order to create and implement the school counseling strategy as required by the bill. Localities indicated that the primary expense would be hiring additional counselors in order to provide the mental health screenings and student services.

A few localities (Towns) reported no fiscal impact, as schools are not a function of Towns.

The precise impact of the bill scales with the size of the locality; more populous localities reported greater fiscal impacts than less populous ones.

Net Increase in Expenditures: Itemized Estimates by Responding Localities

Locality	Juris	Recurring Expense- Personnel		Recurring Expense - Operating		Recurring Expense - Capital		Recurring Expense - Other	
		FY23	FY24	FY23	FY24	FY23	FY24	FY23	FY24
City of Harrisonburg	City	\$330,000	\$330,000	\$100,000	\$100,000				
City of Manassas	City			\$100,000	\$100,000				
City of Richmond	City		\$15,120,000						
Henrico County	County								
Roanoke County	County	\$600,000	\$630,000						
Wise County	County								
Northern Neck PDC	Other								
Town of Blacksburg	Town								
Town of Chincoteague	Town								
Town of Marion	Town								

Net Increase in Expenditures: Itemized Estimates by Responding Localities

Locality	Nonrecurring Expense - Operating		Nonrecurring Expense - Capital		Nonrecurring Expense - Other		Penny Value of Increase on Real Estate Rate*	Total Increase in Expenses (Biennium Total)
	FY23	FY24	FY23	FY24	FY23	FY24		
City of Harrisonburg							0.01	\$860,000
City of Manassas							0.002	\$200,000
City of Richmond							0.04	\$15,120,000
Henrico County							0	\$0
Roanoke County	\$150,000						0.0208	\$1,380,000
Wise County								\$0
Northern Neck PDC								\$0
Town of Blacksburg								\$0
Town of Chincoteague								\$0
Town of Marion								\$0

Locality	Expenditure Narrative by Responding Localities
City of Harrisonburg	Schools would need to procure mental health screeners for each of our students which would cost about \$15/student. In addition, schools would need to hire at least 4 additional mental health counselors to provide the screening and services to our students.
City of Manassas	Manassas City Public Schools does not have a comprehensive school counseling program based upon our interpretation of the language in Senate Bill #856. While we certainly provide licensed counseling services in accordance with a national framework, we do not conduct assessments of all student's mental health (subsection 22.1-209.001 section 6). If this is the requirement, this process would be very time consuming and costly to the division (in excess of \$100,000 annually). The actual penny value of increase is \$0.002 or two-tenths of one cent.
City of Richmond	The passage of this bill would result in a large expenditure increase over the next few years for development and implementation by the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year. We estimate a need for an additional 336 counselors in order to thoroughly develop and implement a comprehensive school counseling program, as described in the bill. The student population is 21,000 and the success of this program may demand a ratio of 50 students to 1 counselor rather than the current 250:1 ratio. A phased-in approach to hiring would lead to fiscal implications in 2024 (\$15.1M) and 2025 (\$15.1M). Additional operational costs to implement this program such as technology needs, materials, and capital costs for office space are undetermined at this time.
Henrico County	However, we cannot determine that because we will need to compare based on the current programs Roanoke County schools offer today and the proposed requirements. An increase in personnel or curriculum will cause an increase in expenses.
Roanoke County	Just thinking really quickly and looking over very little information, I would think this would cost at the very least \$750,000 per year if I'm reading it correctly. I think we would need one person (counselor) for our middle schools, one for our high schools, one for Alt. Ed, RLA, and Career Tech, and at least 2 for our primary schools and one that would cover our two combined schools. That would be a total of 6 counselors. We would also have to purchase screening tools and provide training.
Wise County	
Northern Neck PDC	Please defer to the input of local school boards to determine cost. No fiscal impact to Planning District Commissions.
Town of Blacksburg	Not applicable to the Town.
Town of Chincoteague	
Town of Marion	

* Penny value is defined as the amount a locality would need to raise their real estate tax rate to cover the fiscal impacts of the bill, assuming no other changes to revenues or expenditures. It is represented in terms of dollars (e.g., 0.01 is a one cent increase in the real estate tax rate, etc.).