



# MLDS CENTER

Maryland Longitudinal Data System

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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** MLDS Governing Board  
**FROM:** Ross Goldstein  
**DATE:** February 29, 2019  
**SUBJECT:** Legislative Session Updates

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The purpose of this agenda item is to provide an update on current legislation pertinent to the MLDS Center.

1. *House Bill 704 - Maryland Longitudinal Data System - Student Data and Governing Board* - Current law lists specific data elements which are not “student data” and therefore may not be included as part of the MLDS. Two of those data elements are discipline data and juvenile delinquency records. This bill removes the restriction and specifically includes those two data elements as part of the definition of “student data.”

Fiscal Analysis - Discipline records would come from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and can be managed through existing resources. Juvenile delinquency records would be provided by the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS). To support this new data from a new state agency, a full-time position for a liaison would need to be created. The position would be similar to the liaisons with DLLR, MSDE, and MHEC.

2. *House Bill 1206 - Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center - Data Matching* - This bill impacts MLDS Center collection of data related to student address and wage information.

Student Address - The bill requires county boards of education to convert student home addresses into a U.S. Census Bureau tract or block number and then provide that information to the State Department of Education (MSDE). MSDE will in turn provide these data to the MLDS Center. MSDE and the MLDS Center can use these data to link to Census Bureau information on aggregate socioeconomic status for each tract or block (such as median household income). Currently, the MLDS, like the education and research communities, rely on free and reduced-price meals (FARMS) data to identify economically disadvantaged students and schools. Using the FARMS indicator as a measure of economic status has advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that it is readily available and it is a commonly used measure in education research (because it is usually the only measure available). One disadvantage is that the FARMS indicator is only a proxy measure of poverty; it reflects only household income and not parental educational attainment or occupational status (Cowan et al., 2012). A second disadvantage is that it reflects only families that chose to participate, not all who are eligible. A third disadvantage is that recent changes to the National School Lunch Program have expanded eligibility so that many students receive free meals at school regardless of household income, making data since 2012 particularly inaccurate (USDE, 2012)

Fiscal Impact - The bill requires the Center to establish a protocol for converting student home address into a Census tract or block number. The Center will need to develop and provide a uniform protocol that automates and standardizes the conversion process. This will ensure a uniform and accurate conversion process. The cost to the Center to develop this protocol, test it, and train county board of education staff on its use will cost approximately \$200,000 to hire the following contractual services: Business Analyst/Programmer, Trainer, and Independent IT Security Analysis.

Wage Information The bill also permits the establishment of a data sharing arrangement between the MLDS Center and the Comptroller for research purposes. Specifically, the Center will provide the Comptroller with specified student information and the Comptroller will match the student information and provide aggregated data from the matched information on the average amount of wages earned. For the Center, this information will fill existing gaps in student workforce data created by the fact that the Unemployment Insurance (the Center's source for workforce data) is not filed by members of the military, federal workers, and individuals who are self-employed.

Fiscal Impact - The fiscal impact to the Center is minimal and can be accommodated using existing resources. The only additional cost would be an independent security review to ensure the process for sharing and managing data are secure. The estimated cost of an independent security review is approximately \$20,000.

3. *Senate Bill 493 - Workforce Data Act of 2019* - This bill requires the Secretary of the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation to require employers to include the following information in their quarterly contribution and employment reporting:
  - a. The occupation and job title of each employee;
  - b. The number of hours each employee has worked during the calendar quarter; and
  - c. Location at which the employee works.

This bill does not specifically mention the MLDS Center. However, if this bill is enacted, this is data that the Center can receive from DLLR as part of the quarterly Unemployment Insurance wage records. The proposed information would address several gaps in Center data.

**Action**

Informational purposes only