

HOUSE BILL 746

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By: **Delegate Miller**

Introduced and read first time: January 31, 2024

Assigned to: Ways and Means

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Education – Maryland Office of the Inspector General for Education – Powers**
3 **and Notifications**

4 FOR the purpose of providing that the Maryland Office of the Inspector General for
5 Education is a state educational authority under a certain federal law; providing that
6 the Maryland Office of the Inspector General for Education is the State unit
7 authorized to audit or evaluate certain education programs; prohibiting the
8 Inspector General for Education from serving more than a certain number of full
9 terms; requiring the Governor, the Attorney General, and the State Treasurer to
10 provide the Inspector General with a certain notice and opportunity for a hearing
11 before removing the Inspector General; authorizing the Inspector General to appoint
12 and retain certain employees and consultants, including Deputy Inspectors General;
13 expanding the types of reviews the Inspector General may conduct and the entities
14 the Inspector General may review; requiring the Inspector General to advise a
15 person of the right to counsel when a subpoena is served if the subpoena requires an
16 appearance; authorizing a circuit court to grant appropriate relief after conducting
17 a certain hearing in a criminal proceeding; authorizing the Inspector General to
18 obtain legal services from a person outside the Office of the Attorney General under
19 certain circumstances; requiring each unit of government or county board of
20 education that received State education funds to post a certain notice and, on request
21 of the Maryland Office of the Inspector General for Education, distribute certain
22 information; and generally relating to the Maryland Office of the Inspector General
23 for Education.

24 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
25 Article – Education
26 Section 9.10–101 and 9.10–105
27 Annotated Code of Maryland
28 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

29 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



Article – Education
Section 9.10–102 through 9.10–104
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2022 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

BY adding to
Article – Education
Section 9.10–106
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2022 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Education

9.10–101.

(a) In this title the following words have the meanings indicated.

(b) “Inspector General” means the Inspector General in the Maryland Office of the Inspector General for Education.

(c) “Office” means the Maryland Office of the Inspector General for Education.

9.10–102.

(a) There is a Maryland Office of the Inspector General for Education.

(b) The Office is [an]:

(1) AN independent unit of the State;

(2) A STATE EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITY UNDER THE FEDERAL FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT; AND

(3) THE STATE UNIT AUTHORIZED TO AUDIT OR EVALUATE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN THE STATE THAT RECEIVE FEDERAL OR STATE SUPPORT.

(c) The purpose of the Office is to provide accountability and transparency in the expenditure of public funds for education in the State.

(d) All expenses and operations related to the administration of the Office shall be separately identified and independent of any other unit of State government.

1 9.10–103.

2 (a) There is an Inspector General in the Maryland Office of the Inspector General
3 for Education.

4 (b) (1) An individual is eligible to be the Inspector General only if the
5 individual executes an affidavit stating that the individual will not accept appointment to,
6 or be a candidate for, a State or local office:

7 (i) During the period of service as the Inspector General; and

8 (ii) For at least 3 years immediately after the individual last serves
9 as the Inspector General.

10 (2) The Inspector General shall renew the affidavit every 2 years during
11 the period of service.

12 (3) A failure to renew the affidavit under this subsection shall subject the
13 Inspector General to removal from office under this section.

14 (c) (1) The Inspector General shall be appointed unanimously by the
15 Governor, the Attorney General, and the State Treasurer, subject to the advice and consent
16 of the Senate.

17 (2) (I) The term of the Inspector General is 5 years, beginning July 1
18 after the appointment of the Inspector General.

19 (II) **THE INSPECTOR GENERAL MAY NOT SERVE MORE THAN**
20 **TWO FULL 5–YEAR TERMS.**

21 (3) At the end of a term, the Inspector General shall continue to serve until
22 a successor is appointed.

23 (4) If a vacancy occurs in the Office, an Interim Inspector General shall be
24 appointed as a successor to serve for the remainder of the unexpired term.

25 (d) (1) **[The] SUBJECT TO PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION, THE**
26 **Inspector General may be removed unanimously by the Governor, the Attorney General,**
27 **and the State Treasurer for:**

28 [(1)] (I) Misconduct in office;

29 [(2)] (II) Persistent failure to perform the duties of the Office; or

30 [(3)] (III) Conduct prejudicial to the proper administration of justice.

(2) (I) BEFORE REMOVING THE INSPECTOR GENERAL, THE GOVERNOR, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, AND THE STATE TREASURER SHALL PROVIDE THE INSPECTOR GENERAL WITH WRITTEN NOTICE OF THE PROPOSED REMOVAL.

(II) WITHIN 10 DAYS AFTER RECEIVING THE WRITTEN NOTICE OF THE PROPOSED REMOVAL, THE INSPECTOR GENERAL MAY REQUEST AN ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING.

(III) THE GOVERNOR, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, AND THE STATE TREASURER MAY DESIGNATE AN ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL TO SERVE AS THE ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING OFFICER FOR A HEARING UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (II) OF THIS PARAGRAPH.

(e) (1) Subject to paragraph (2) of this subsection, the Inspector General shall be professionally qualified through experience or education in at least one of the following areas:

- (i) Law;**
- (ii) Auditing;**
- (iii) Government operations;**
- (iv) Financial management; or**
- (v) Education policy.**

(2) If the Inspector General is professionally qualified in the area of education policy, the Inspector General also shall be professionally qualified through experience or education in at least one of the other areas listed in paragraph (1) of this subsection.

(f) (1) The Inspector General is entitled to the salary provided in the State budget.

(2) Funding for the Office shall be as provided in the State budget.

(G) (1) THE INSPECTOR GENERAL MAY, AS PROVIDED IN THE STATE BUDGET, APPOINT TERM MERIT EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING ONE OR MORE DEPUTY INSPECTORS GENERAL.

(2) THE TERM OF A DEPUTY INSPECTOR GENERAL SHALL END WHEN THE NEXT INSPECTOR GENERAL TAKES OFFICE, UNLESS THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

1 SPECIFIES A SHORTER TERM WHEN APPOINTING THE DEPUTY INSPECTOR
2 GENERAL.

3 (3) THE INSPECTOR GENERAL MAY, AS PROVIDED IN THE STATE
4 BUDGET, RETAIN PROJECT STAFF OR OTHER CONSULTANTS BY CONTRACT.

5 (4) THE INSPECTOR GENERAL MAY, WITH THE AGREEMENT OF THE
6 HEAD OF ANY OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCY OR COUNTY BOARD, TEMPORARILY
7 DETAIL AN EMPLOYEE OF THAT DEPARTMENT OR COUNTY BOARD TO THE OFFICE.

8 (5) THE INSPECTOR GENERAL MAY APPOINT AND EMPLOY
9 PROFESSIONAL AND CLERICAL STAFF, INCLUDING ATTORNEYS, ACCOUNTANTS,
10 AUDITORS, ANALYSTS, AND INVESTIGATORS, AS PROVIDED IN THE STATE BUDGET,
11 TO CONDUCT THE WORK OF THE OFFICE.

12 9.10–104.

13 (a) (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, the Inspector
14 General [shall be responsible for examining and investigating the] MAY CONDUCT AN
15 INVESTIGATION, BUDGETARY ANALYSIS, AND FINANCIAL, MANAGEMENT, OR
16 PERFORMANCE AUDIT OR SIMILAR REVIEW OF THE matters listed in subsection (b) of
17 this section with respect to the management and affairs of the following entities:

- 18 (i) County boards, local school systems, and public schools;
19 (ii) Nonpublic schools that receive State funds;
20 (iii) The Department; and
21 (iv) The Interagency Commission on School Construction.

22 (2) The Inspector General may not examine or investigate a nonpublic
23 school that does not receive State funds.

24 (3) IN PERFORMING THE FUNCTIONS UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS
25 SUBSECTION, THE INSPECTOR GENERAL MAY:

26 (I) SEEK ASSISTANCE FROM ANY OTHER GOVERNMENT
27 AGENCY OR PRIVATE PARTY; AND

28 (II) UNDERTAKE ANY PROJECT JOINTLY WITH ANY OTHER
29 GOVERNMENT AGENCY.

30 (b) The Inspector General may receive and investigate complaints or information
31 concerning:

(1) Instances of fraud, waste, or abuse involving the use of public funds and property;

(2) Violations of civil rights, as defined in federal or State laws, of students or employees of the entities listed in subsection (a) of this section;

(3) Whether policies and procedures governing the prevention and reporting of child abuse and neglect comply with applicable federal and State laws on child abuse and neglect; and

(4) Compliance with other applicable **POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND** federal and State laws.

(c) (1) The Inspector General may not disclose the identity of the source of a complaint or information provided under subsection (b) of this section unless the Inspector General:

(i) Obtains the written consent of the source; or

(ii) Determines that disclosure of the identity of the source is necessary and unavoidable during the course of the investigation.

(2) If the Inspector General determines that disclosure of the identity of a source is necessary and unavoidable, the Inspector General shall notify the source in writing at least 7 days before disclosure.

(d) (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, during an investigation, **BUDGETARY ANALYSIS, OR FINANCIAL, MANAGEMENT, OR PERFORMANCE AUDIT OR SIMILAR REVIEW** conducted in accordance with this title, the Inspector General shall have access to all records, data, reports, contracts, correspondence, or other documents of an entity listed under subsection (a) of this section that is the subject of the investigation.

(2) The Inspector General may not access or compel the production of documents that are:

(i) Protected under the attorney–client privilege; or

(ii) Confidential or privileged under applicable provisions of federal or State law.

(e) (1) (i) During an investigation, **BUDGETARY ANALYSIS, OR FINANCIAL, MANAGEMENT, OR PERFORMANCE AUDIT OR SIMILAR REVIEW** conducted in accordance with this title, the Inspector General may:

1. Seek and obtain sworn testimony; and

2. Issue subpoenas as necessary to compel the production of documents and records or the attendance of witnesses.

(ii) A subpoena may be served in the same manner as one issued by a circuit court.

(2) (i) A person may have an attorney present during any contact with the Inspector General.

(ii) The Inspector General shall advise a person of the right to counsel when a subpoena is served, **IF THE SUBPOENA REQUIRES THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON.**

(3) (i) 1. The Inspector General immediately may report the failure of a person to obey a lawfully served subpoena to the circuit court of the county that has jurisdiction.

2. The Inspector General shall provide a copy of the subpoena and proof of service to the circuit court.

(ii) After conducting a hearing at which the person who allegedly failed to comply with a subpoena has an opportunity to be heard and represented by counsel **IN A CRIMINAL PROCEEDING**, the circuit court may grant appropriate relief.

(f) A State or local agency, county board, nonpublic school, or public official may not take adverse, retaliatory action against an individual [because the individual cooperated] **WHO:**

(1) COOPERATED with or provided information to the Inspector General;
OR

(2) IS PROTECTED UNDER TITLE 6, SUBTITLE 9 OF THIS ARTICLE.

(g) Records or information provided to, prepared for, or obtained by the Inspector General in connection with an investigation are confidential and not subject to disclosure under the Public Information Act.

(h) If the Inspector General finds or has reasonable grounds to believe that there has been a criminal violation of federal or State law, the Inspector General shall notify and refer the matter to the appropriate federal, State, or local law enforcement authority, local State's Attorney's office, Office of the Attorney General, Office of the State Prosecutor, or federal agency.

(i) If the Inspector General identifies an issue of concern that would not constitute a criminal violation of State law, the Inspector General may report the issue of

concern to the State Superintendent, the State Board, the Interagency Commission on School Construction, the Governor, and, in accordance with § 2–1257 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

(j) The Inspector General may [appoint and employ professional and clerical staff, including attorneys, accountants, auditors, analysts, and investigators, as appropriated in the annual State budget, to conduct the work of the Office] **OBTAIN LEGAL SERVICES FROM A PERSON OUTSIDE THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, IF:**

(1) THE INSPECTOR GENERAL FINDS THAT OBTAINING INDEPENDENT LEGAL SERVICES IS NECESSARY TO EFFECTIVELY PERFORM THE OFFICE’S DUTIES; AND

(2) THE DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT APPROPRIATES SUFFICIENT FUNDS TO COVER THE COST OF THE LEGAL SERVICES.

(K) THE STATE SHALL PROVIDE THE INSPECTOR GENERAL WITH APPROPRIATELY LOCATED OFFICE SPACE AND SUFFICIENT PHYSICAL FACILITIES, INCLUDING NECESSARY OFFICE SUPPLIES, EQUIPMENT, AND FURNISHINGS TO ENABLE THE OFFICE TO PERFORM ITS INDEPENDENT FUNCTIONS.

9.10–105.

(a) On or before December 1 each year, the Office shall submit a report to the State Superintendent, the State Board, the Interagency Commission on School Construction, the Governor, and, in accordance with § 2–1257 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

(b) The report shall include information on:

(1) The Office’s goals and priorities for the upcoming year;

(2) The Office’s activities during the preceding year;

(3) The number of incidents, in the aggregate, and a general summary of the nature of the reported incidents, referred to the appropriate federal, State, or local law enforcement authority, local State’s Attorney’s office, Office of the Attorney General, Office of the State Prosecutor, or federal agency during the preceding year;

(4) Specific findings and recommendations relating to:

(i) Instances of fraud, waste, or abuse involving the use of public funds and property;

(ii) Violations of the civil rights of students or employees;

(iii) Policies and procedures related to child abuse and neglect and compliance with applicable federal and State laws; and

(iv) Compliance with other applicable federal and State laws; and

(5) Any regulatory or statutory changes necessary to ensure compliance with applicable federal and State laws.

9.10–106.

EACH UNIT OF GOVERNMENT OR COUNTY BOARD THAT RECEIVES STATE EDUCATION FUNDS SHALL:

(1) KEEP POSTED IN CONSPICUOUS PLACES ON ITS PREMISES A NOTICE PREPARED BY THE OFFICE SETTING FORTH THE METHODS FOR REPORTING FRAUD, WASTE, AND ABUSE OF EDUCATION RESOURCES;

(2) KEEP POSTED IN CONSPICUOUS PLACES ON ITS WEBSITE A DIRECT LINK TO THE OFFICE FOR REPORTING FRAUD, WASTE, AND ABUSE; AND

(3) ON REQUEST OF THE OFFICE, DISTRIBUTE INFORMATION RELATED TO THE PREVENTION, DETECTION, AND REPORTING OF FRAUD, WASTE, AND ABUSE OF EDUCATION RESOURCES TO THE STATE, COUNTY BOARD EMPLOYEES, AND OTHER PERSONS OR ENTITIES RECEIVING STATE EDUCATION FUNDS.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 2024.