



Renee Spence, Executive Director  
9 Trotters Ridge Court, Catonsville, MD 21228  
410-925-2183  
[pssamed@gmail.com](mailto:pssamed@gmail.com)

---

BILL: Senate Bill 406  
TITLE: Maryland Freestate ChalleNGe Academy – Funding  
DATE: February 24, 2016  
POSITION: OPPOSE  
COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation  
CONTACT: Renee McGuirk Spence, Executive Director, PSSAM  
Email: [pssamed@gmail.com](mailto:pssamed@gmail.com); Cell: 410-925-2183

Senate Bill 406 requires the Governor to appropriate general funds to the Maryland Freestate ChalleNGe Academy in an amount equal to 25% of a specified target per pupil foundation amount for specified cadets beginning in fiscal year 2018; requires a county board of education to reimburse a specified fund a specified amount for specified cadets, and requires the Comptroller, in consultation with the Military Department and the State Department of Education, to establish a specified process.

PSSAM recognizes and appreciates the importance of Maryland’s Freestate ChalleNGe Academy (FCA) program. The Freestate ChalleNGe Academy is a military-based program for youth to help them learn discipline and the skills necessary to be successful in the real-world. We applaud the FCA for giving Maryland’s youth the opportunity to change their lives around by providing a second chance to become productive citizens.

However, PSSAM **opposes** Senate Bill 406 as an unfunded mandate. Beginning in fiscal 2018, local school boards will be required to reimburse the General State School Fund for the amount provided under the bill for each cadet who was included in that county’s current or prior year FTE enrollment count. Estimates are that local school system reimbursements to the General State School Fund would total \$483,200 in FY 2018.

Senate Bill 406 would once again place significant financial burden on several of our largest school systems. For example, the fiscal impact for Prince George’s County Public Schools would be nearly half (\$239,000) of the estimated cost in FY 2018. Local school systems continue to struggle with the enormous financial burden that resulted in the loss last year of \$68.1 million from the Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI) funding. It would be extremely difficult for local school system budgets to absorb yet another serious reduction in funds while maintaining a quality education program for all students.

For the reasons stated above, PSSAM **OPPOSES** Senate Bill 406 and requests an **unfavorable** committee report.