OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

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Office of Research and Drafting

Legislative Budget Office

S.B. 290
136th General Assembly

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

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Version: As Passed by the Senate

Primary Sponsors: Sens. Patton and Reynolds

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: Yes

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Highlights

- Some school districts and other public schools likely will incur costs to meet the bill's requirement to purchase and install at least one exterior secure master key box for each school building by June 30, 2027. The number of public school buildings without a compliant master key box is not known. Each master key box costs approximately $1,000, excluding installation and potential security system integrations.
- Under the bill, districts and schools applying for existing state grants for school safety training may use those funds to purchase and install master key boxes.

Detailed Analysis

The bill

The bill requires, by June 30, 2027, each school district; community school; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) school; college-preparatory boarding school; and chartered nonpublic school to purchase and install at least one exterior secure master key box for each school building that is assigned an internal retrieval number by the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW). The master key box must be installed on the school building or in a strategic location for optimal law enforcement response on school premises. Each master key box must also comply with Underwriters Laboratories Standard 1037 (UL 1037) and permit emergency access to both law enforcement agencies and emergency responders from an exterior location designated by the local law enforcement authorities. Each district or school must (1) collaborate with law enforcement to include in the master key box master external and internal keys, access cards, and school building maps, (2) provide updated maps to local law enforcement agencies and emergency responders when substantial modifications are made to the building, (3) notify local law enforcement agencies and emergency responders when changes

are made to master external and internal keys or access cards, and (4) ensure that all keys or cards are in current operable form. The bill also specifies any record that discloses the location of a master key box on a school building or school premises is not a public record. Finally, it authorizes a district or school to use a school safety training grant it may apply for and receive from the Office of the Attorney General (AGO) under continuing law to purchase and install an exterior secure master key box.

Fiscal effects

Costs to a district or school will depend upon whether it already has a UL 1037-compliant master key box on each of its buildings. The Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) estimates that each master key box costs approximately $1,000, excluding installation and potential security system integrations. Equipping each of Ohio's roughly 3,600 public schools would cost about $3.6 million (3,600 public schools x $1,000 per master key box) before installation costs. According to OFCC, at least 1,400 schools already have master key boxes as required for buildings constructed under OFCC facilities programs. However, it is not known how many of these buildings have UL 1037-compliant master key boxes, as OFCC's Ohio School Design Manual does not specify a specific type of master key box in its standards. On the other hand, section 1301:7-7-05(F) of the Ohio Administrative Code authorizes local fire code officials to require UL 1037-compliant master key boxes on buildings "where access to or within a structure or an area is restricted because of secured openings or where immediate access is necessary for life-saving or fire-fighting purposes." Based on this rule, it is possible that many more districts or schools already have a UL 1037-compliant master key box on their buildings. Ultimately, the number of buildings that would need a UL 1037-compliant master key box is not known, as it appears this type of information is not readily available or tracked.

At least some portion of a district or school's costs to comply with the bill may be offset if it is able to use a school safety training grant for this purpose. School safety training grants are supported by GRF line item 055502, School Safety Training Grants, with appropriations of $10.0 million in each of FY 2026 and FY 2027 in the AGO budget (made under H.B. 96 of the 136th General Assembly). Under continuing law, the AGO, in consultation with the DEW Director and the Director of Behavioral Health, provides these grants to public and chartered nonpublic schools, educational service centers, local law enforcement agencies, and schools operated by county boards of developmental disabilities for a variety of school safety and school climate programs and training. According to the AGO,[1] under the current grant guidelines districts and schools may apply for funding through a formula-based grant of $2,500 or $4.50 per student (whichever is greater) and a program-based grant of up to $40,000, until funds are exhausted. Funds are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. The AGO already anticipates full allocation of these funds from line item 055502 in FY 2026 and FY 2027 for its existing purposes. As a result, some districts and schools may bear the full cost of purchasing and installing a UL 1037-compliant master key box on each building currently without one.

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[1] See the news release AG Yost Announces $9 million in Grant Funds to Enhance Safety at Ohio Schools, October 27, 2025, which is available on the AGO's website: ohioattorneygeneral.gov.