

BILL: Senate Bill 162
TITLE: Public Schools - Cyber Safety Guide and Training Course - Development, Implementation, and Reporting
DATE: January 19, 2022
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT
COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports Senate Bill 162, with amendments to clarify that any curricular or course of student instruction elements of the bill ensure that the content of classroom instruction and adoption of any new course be at the discretion of the local school system.

This bill addresses a very important issue, and one highlighted by the unprecedented utilization by all students of online learning throughout the school closures necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the bill proposes to mandate not only the development of a cyber safety guide and professional development training but also a course of instruction to be offered in grades 3 through 12 beginning in the 2023-2024 school year. MABE has no objection to the joint efforts of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Maryland Department of Health (MDH), Maryland Center for School Safety, and Department of Information Technology to develop resources for use in instruction and professional development regarding safe internet, social media, and technology usage. However, MABE is concerned with the prescriptive nature of the mandate to implement each of these provisions.

Therefore, MABE requests an amendment to strike "IMPLEMENTED IN" and replace with "DISTRIBUTED AND MADE AVAILABLE FOR THE DISCRETIONARY USE BY" in line 4 on page 2.

As this committee knows, MABE opposes efforts by the General Assembly to legislate curriculum, firmly believing that this role belongs to local boards of education in conjunction with the State Board. In the context of recognizing the essential role of the state legislature in enacting laws which establish the framework for key elements of the State's approach to public education, MABE continues to support local decision-making authority in developing and implementing curriculum and courses of instruction. However, MABE appreciates the value of the State's investment in developing the types of cyber safety resources proposed under Senate Bill 162.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 162 with the amendments described above.