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BILL: SB 149

TITLE: Education - Curriculum - Unit of Instruction on September 11, 2001
Terrorist Attacks

DATE: February 8, 2023

POSITION: Oppose

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four local school superintendents, **opposes** Senate Bill 149.

Senate Bill 149 requires public schools (as well as nonpublic schools that participate in State-funded education programs) to include a unit of instruction on the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks that is consistent with guidelines developed by the Maryland State Board of Education (MSDE), beginning in the 2024-2025 school year. Additionally, the bill encourages nonpublic schools that do not participate in State-funded education programs to include in the curriculum a unit of instruction on the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

PSSAM has a longstanding track record of opposing efforts by the General Assembly to codify curriculum standards, assessments, or graduation requirements. Local superintendents strongly believe that the role of curriculum development and implementation belongs solely to local boards of education in conjunction with MSDE. Rest assured, PSSAM's opposition to this bill does not rest on an evaluation of the merits of teaching any specified subject matter, but rather opposition to statutorily mandating revisions to content standards and curriculum.

The Maryland General Assembly, in creating the Maryland State Board of Education and local boards of education, has delegated to them the responsibility of delivering a high-quality statewide system of public education through State standards and accountability measures, as well as locally governed and administered curriculum. The State Board establishes State content frameworks, state assessment standards, and minimum state graduation requirements, while each

local board and school system implement locally-developed curriculum to ensure that the state content frameworks are followed, student performance standards are met, and students are prepared to meet graduation requirements.

In the context of the content standards and unit of instruction proposed by Senate Bill 149, PSSAM highlights the current Maryland State Standards for Social Studies in Grade 10, which includes the standard: “Evaluate United States policies and actions in response to international terrorism, such as the attack on the Marine barracks in Beirut (1983), Embassy bombings (2000), the attacks on the U.S.S. Cole (2000), and September 11, 2001.” Furthermore, many local school systems choose to provide supplemental resources curated for elementary and secondary school students to assist our schools in paying tribute on this day, and more explicit lessons are often implemented into local curriculum standards for Grade 9 U.S. History and Grade 11 World History.

Again, PSSAM emphasizes that our opposition to this bill does not rest on the merits of instruction pertaining to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, but rather the implications of curricular mandates on local school systems. Senate Bill 149, as well as similar bills which seek to interject or extract piecemeal segments of the curriculum, only serve to weaken the effectiveness of the educational curriculum.

For these reasons, PSSAM respectfully **opposes** Senate Bill 149 and requests an unfavorable committee report.