

Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director
1217 S. Potomac Street
Baltimore, MD 21224
410-935-7281
marypat.fannon@pssam.org



BILL: HB 1386
TITLE: Education - School Employee Anti Bias Training - Requirements
DATE: March 27, 2024
POSITION: Unfavorable
COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four Maryland local school superintendents, **opposes** House Bill 1386.

This legislation requires the State Department of Education, in consultation with the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board, to develop guidelines for an anti-bias training program for school employees. Further, it requires local school systems to provide training that is job-embedded, paid professional development provided during non teaching time; to the extent practical, be offered in a peer-to-peer setting, take half a day or less and incorporate lessons from local incidents.

PSSAM strongly supports the sentiment behind this legislation but opposes the overly prescriptive requirements in the bill. All school systems have some professional development that include elements and topics described in this bill. In fact, many systems have a staff position whose sole responsibility is to incorporate concepts of diversity and equity in student and professional development curriculum. This bill's omnibus, one-size-fits-all approach does not recognize the extraordinary efforts currently underway in the LEAs, and instead layers on a tremendous amount of new training that will be incredibly expensive to implement.

In addition, the legislation requires that training is created and developed in conjunction with staff and teachers. This is not a bad practice per se, but completely disregards our local flexibility to negotiate these types of activities with our bargaining units, along with any other number of locally identified priorities. This legislation also does not recognize the existing, competing

professional development requirements with which we must comply. Nor does it contemplate or acknowledge that some of these existing programs would be edged out or diminished to allow for this extensive new training.

One of our largest school systems estimates that this legislation could easily cost over \$600,000 and would require a minimum of 5 additional specialists . This is in addition to their existing office of equity that already does much of this work, but not in the very prescriptive manner required in the bill. In addition, this estimate does not account for costs that might be needed to engage consultants, as necessary, to reconfigure their internal team responsible for implementation. In fact, this system has only been able to sustain their current high level of equity programming due to the generous support of philanthropic funders. They, along with every other LEA, does not have the infrastructure or fiscal resources to sustain the new requirements every two years for the vast number of employees who would be impacted by this legislation.

Again, PSSAM supports the goals of this legislation and is happy to work with the sponsor in the interim to provide an inventory of existing training on these topics to more holistically identify gaps in local professional development.

For these reasons, we **oppose** HB 1386 and request an **unfavorable** report.