

BILL: Senate Bill 1058
TITLE: Education - Curriculum Standards - Antihate and Holocaust Education
(Educate to Stop the Hate Act)
DATE: March 27, 2024
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) strongly opposes Senate Bill 1058 as amended, because it would apply new, unduly restrictive, content and curriculum standards, and expand the authority of the State Department and Board of Education and State Superintendent. MABE is greatly concerned that these changes go beyond the subject matter for which the bill was introduced (with significant impacts on social studies and history standards and instruction), to mandate new standards and state-level controls that encompass all subject areas and courses.

MABE certainly appreciates the intent of Senate Bill 1058, as introduced, and the critical importance of our students studying the Holocaust, the period of history from 1933-1945 during which approximately six million Jewish persons became victims of Nazi Germany and its collaborators throughout Europe. It was a time in history that must never be forgotten. Therefore, the horrific acts that took place during the German occupation in Europe, and in Russia and other nations, are covered in the social studies curriculum currently being taught in middle and high schools throughout our state. MABE also recognizes that this bill would broaden the mandated reforms to the state curricular frameworks to include instruction on prejudice and racism.

However, as amended in the Senate, the bill would now establish an entirely new set of mandated standards for all content and curriculum standards. 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. Therefore, MABE's opposition to this bill does not rest on an evaluation of the merits of teaching any specified subject matter, but rather the opposition to statutorily mandating the teaching of any one concept or content item. Senate Bill 1058, as amended, would not only prescribe very specific actions regarding social studies and history content and curriculum standards, but the bill would also mandate that all of these changes be accomplished by the 2025-2026 school year. In this way, the bill not only poses an unprecedented intrusion in the longstanding process of state and local coordination of updates and reforms to content standards but also impose an enormous unfunded mandate to revamp social studies and history instruction on a comprehensive statewide basis in only one year.

In creating the State Board and local boards of education, the General Assembly has delegated to them the responsibility for developing curriculum and administering assessments. The State Board establishes State standards and statewide graduation requirements; the local boards implement locally-developed curriculum to ensure that standards are met and students are prepared to meet graduation requirements. State and local assessment programs ensure that all students, schools, and school systems are held accountable for their work.

Therefore, in the context of recognizing the 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 a much more robust role for local decision-making authority in developing curriculum than would be provided if this bill were enacted. For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 1058.