



**PSSAM**  
Public School Superintendents' Association  
OF MARYLAND

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**BILL:** HB 795  
**TITLE:** Education - Peace and Conflict Studies - High School Course  
**DATE:** February 14, 2024  
**POSITION:** Oppose  
**COMMITTEE:** House Ways and Means Committee  
**CONTACT:** Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

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The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **opposes** House Bill 795.

House Bill 795 would require the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop curriculum content standards for a high school course on peace and conflict studies. Additionally, each local board of education would be required to implement a course on peace and conflict studies in each public high school in the county beginning in the 2025-2026 school year. Furthermore, each public high school would be required to set aside funds to hire a mediator to provide education and support to students and school personnel relating to conflict resolution and peaceful communication.

PSSAM has a longstanding policy 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 is *not an evaluation of the merits of teaching any specified subject matter*, but rather opposition to statutorily mandating content standards and curriculum.

The Maryland General Assembly, in creating the Maryland State Board of Education and local boards of education, has delegated to these entities the responsibility of delivering a high-quality statewide system of public education. The State Board establishes State content frameworks, state assessment standards, and minimum state graduation requirements, while each local board and school system implements 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.

Superintendents are committed to providing students with a comprehensive, well-rounded curriculum that includes the teaching of personal development skills, such as conflict resolution after proper stakeholder input and review processes. In addition to creating a mandated curriculum, this bill would also require local systems to use existing funds to implement the bill without the guarantee of new funding source, therefore creating an unfunded mandate for all twenty-four local systems.

House Bill 795, alongside similar bills that seek to interject or extract piecemeal segments of the curriculum, only serve to weaken the effectiveness of the overall educational curriculum. Again, PSSAM's opposition to this bill does not rest on the merits of instruction pertaining to peace and conflict studies, but the bill's imposition of curricular mandates on local school systems.

For these reasons, PSSAM **opposes** House Bill 795 and requests an unfavorable report.