

BILL: House Bill 795
TITLE: Education – Curriculum Content Standards – Peace and Conflict Studies
(Peace and Conflict Studies Education Act)
DATE: February 14, 2024
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 795, which would require the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop state curriculum content standards for a high school course on peace and conflict studies; mandate that each local school system offer a high school course on peace and conflict studies beginning in the 2025-2026 school year; and require school system to hire a mediator to provide education and support to students and staff on dispute resolution.

Local boards of education are committed to providing all students with opportunities for rigorous and well-rounded educational experiences, including: academic instruction, extracurricular activities, health services, school meals, and athletics. All school systems also strive to provide high quality school facilities in which these services are provided. In these ways, school systems provide programs designed to promote the physical and mental health and fitness of students and to prepare them to maintain a healthy lifestyle as adults. In this light, MABE appreciates the intent of this bill, but opposes adopting the costly programmatic and staffing mandates contained in House Bill 795.

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. On behalf of all local boards of education, MABE places a high priority on advocating for high quality State standards and the local discretion to achieve those standards through locally adopted curriculum and instructional tools.

Again, MABE's opposition to this bill does not rest on an evaluation of the merits of teaching any specified subject matter, certainly not peaceful dispute resolution, but rather on the association's opposition to statutorily mandating the teaching of any one concept or content item.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 795.