
TO: House Ways and Means Committee

BILL: House Bill (HB) 1181 - Education - Education – Curriculum Standards – Antihate and Holocaust Education (Educate to Stop the Hate Act)

DATE: February 28, 2024

POSITION: Oppose

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) respectfully oppose House Bill (HB) 1181 – Education – Curriculum Standards – Antihate and Holocaust Education (Educate to Stop the Hate Act). This legislation requires the State Board to adopt an antihate and Holocaust curriculum standards and curriculum resources by January 1, 2025, and requires all public schools and non-public schools that participate in state-funded education programs to include revised frameworks reflective of historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups by the 2025-2026 school year.

MSDE supports the charge to examine standards and curriculum through a diverse and equitable lens, with a specific focus on the contributions of historically marginalized peoples. The State Board and MSDE are supportive of many of the fundamental principles outlined in the requirements of this bill, and both entities are strident in ensuring that the development of curricular standards and frameworks reflects these shared priorities. We do not oppose the bill based on the merits of the proposed subject matter but on the grounds that the legislative requirement would run counter to the process that is entrusted to the State Board and MSDE.

Further, we share in the belief that social studies coursework can and should be leveraged to challenge contemporary racism and build tolerance and understanding amongst our students. COMAR 13A.04.08.01 mandates that LEAS offer social studies from prekindergarten to twelfth grade which “shall provide for the diversity of student needs, abilities, and interests at the early, middle, and high school learning years”. The regulation also states that the standards must align to the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies Standards. The resulting Maryland Social Studies Standards currently in place are guided by national best practices, and as such, are designed as inquiry statements and do not contain any specific content by design.

However, to improve student outcomes and respond with immediacy and efficiency to emergent curricular and resource needs as they arise, MSDE proposes to convene a “Standards and Frameworks Review Committee” (SFRC) to address the concerns of HB 1181. The SFRC shall be comprised of no more than ten educators (such as teachers, administrators, and/or content supervisors), two parents of Maryland Public School students, two community members (such as University scholars and/or associated content experts) as well as a chairperson selected by MSDE. All members of the SFRC shall undergo a rigorous application and selection process along with training in MSDE protocol. The objective and scope of the SFRC shall be to improve student outcomes by ensuring the alignment of standards and frameworks to emergent needs as identified by MSDE.

Within twelve months, MSDE will convene the SFRC, and intends to bring curricular recommendations aligned to the concerns of HB 1181 to the State Board’s Education Policy Committee for approval. This revised timeline would provide local education agencies with an appropriate amount of time to complete the required curriculum development, training, and procurement of new materials.

In partnership with teachers, supervisors, parents, institutes of higher education, and other stakeholders, MSDE and the State Board will continue to undertake a significant review of state standards and frameworks through the SFRC. In this process, MSDE will be certain to include our critical partners in the General Assembly.

The Department and the State Board respectfully request that the committee considers this information on HB 1181. Please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne, Executive Director of Government Affairs, Education Policy, and Government Relations, at Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov or at 410-767-0504 or Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, at Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov or at 443-915-6094, if you would like any additional information.