



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

BILL: HB 161
TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework - Established
DATE: January 29, 2025
POSITION: Oppose
COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means Committee
CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **opposes** House Bill 161.

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in consultation with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), to develop a comprehensive health education framework that includes, at a minimum, specified topics. Each local board of education must create an age-appropriate curriculum that is consistent with the comprehensive health education framework as specified.

Local superintendents strongly support robust and comprehensive instruction in health education, and believe that the legislative intent of this bill is already being met. However, we ask the Committee to continue to honor the well-established and balanced relationship between the state and local education experts on the creation of standards, and implementation of local curriculum.

As indicated in written testimony from MSDE and the State Board last year, they explained that in January of 2024, under the leadership of the new State Superintendent, "the State Board and MSDE developed a process to review, revise, adopt standards and frameworks, including the existing Comprehensive Health Education Framework." The existing Framework continues to include all topics included in this legislation.

Additionally, their testimony points to existing Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.04.18.01 that “requires LEAs to establish policies, guidelines, and/or procedures for student opt-out regarding instruction related to family life and human sexuality objectives, which includes gender identity and expression and sexual orientation and identity. Further, COMAR 13A.04.18.02 requires local superintendents to certify to the State Superintendent of Schools that the instructional programming within grades prekindergarten through 12 meets, at a minimum, the requirements of the comprehensive health education framework.”

Again, PSSAM strongly supports the current implementation of the health curriculum consistent with State guidelines. Each Maryland local school system must be afforded flexibility in developing curriculum that best reflects the specific, and diverse needs of their student population and local community.

For these reasons, PSSAM **opposes** House Bill 161 and kindly requests an **unfavorable** committee report.