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BILL: House Bill 355
TITLE: Education - Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention Program - Human and Sex Trafficking
HEARING DATE: February 11, 2026
POSITION: UNFAVORABLE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all 24 local boards of education in Maryland, **opposes House Bill 355 Education - Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention Program - Human and Sex Trafficking.**

House Bill 355 would require that the existing mandatory program on sexual abuse and assault taught in local school systems now include, for students in grades 6 through 8, material promoting the awareness and prevention of human and sex trafficking.

While HB 355 is well-intentioned, MABE opposes efforts by the General Assembly to legislate local public school curriculum. The authority to establish curriculum and assessments is the domain of the State Board of Education and the local boards of education, the same entities charged with the responsibility to research, investigate, and evaluate both curriculum and assessments. The State Board and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) have an established process for reviewing, revising, and adopting standards, frameworks, and curricular resources. This process ensures that all curriculum updates are evidence-based, age-appropriate, and developed in collaboration between the State Board, MSDE, the Maryland Department of Health, LEAs, and community members through the Standards and Frameworks Validation Committee (SFVC).

MSDE's Comprehensive Health Education Framework, aligned with the 2nd edition of the National Health Education Standards, addresses age-appropriate topics related to sexual mistreatment, grooming, harassment, abuse, assault, exploitation, and human trafficking. Moreover, compliance with the framework is enforced through COMAR 13A.04.18.02, which requires local superintendents to certify that health education instruction meets, at a minimum, the requirements of the Comprehensive Health Education Framework. HB 355's mandate adding specific topics on human and sex trafficking, while well intentioned, ignores the established process for selecting age-appropriate, evidence-based health education curriculum.

For these reasons, MABE believes that the General Assembly should refrain from curricular mandates and requests an unfavorable report on HB 355.