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BILL: HB 355
TITLE: Education - Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention Program
- Human and Sex Trafficking
DATE: February 11, 2026
POSITION: Unfavorable
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 local school superintendents **opposes** House Bill 355.

This bill requires age-appropriate education program on the awareness and prevention of sexual abuse and assault developed and implemented by the State Board of Education (SBE) and each nonpublic school include, for students in grades 6 through 8, material promoting the awareness and prevention of human and sex trafficking.

(https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2026RS/fnotes/bil_0005/hb0355.pdf)

Local superintendents strongly support robust and comprehensive instruction in age-appropriate health education, including topics covered in this legislation, and believe that the intent of this bill is currently being met.

According to the MSDE, comprehensive health education has been a feature of Maryland education regulation since 1970. In this framework, concepts and skills related to family life and human sexuality must be age-appropriate and taught by teachers who have had additional preparation in the content and teaching methods of the material.

Updated health education standards were adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education in December 2019, and the [Maryland State Framework for Comprehensive Health Education](#) was subsequently revised to align with those standards. The framework was developed by the State Board and MSDE in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Health, local education

agencies, national experts, and key stakeholders to ensure a rigorous review and revision process for standards, frameworks, and curricular resources.

The updated Grade 7 standards require students to analyze laws, policies, and consequences related to sexual mistreatment, grooming, harassment, abuse, assault, exploitation, and human trafficking, all of which are intended to protect young people. In addition, while the Grade 6 and Grade 8 indicators do not explicitly reference “human and sex trafficking,” the terminology used - including sexual mistreatment, grooming, harassment, abuse, assault, exploitation, and boundary violations - was deliberately selected to provide developmentally appropriate instruction on these topics.

Some local school districts have incorporated the topics mentioned above in curricula at all three levels and have included human trafficking specifically in middle school curriculum for several years. Rather than imposing mandates on the teaching of human and sex trafficking awareness, local superintendents support program guidance from the MSDE.

Again, while we appreciate the bill’s good intention, 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.

For these reasons, PSSAM **opposes** House Bill 355 and kindly requests an **unfavorable** report.