

BILL: Senate Bill 267
TITLE: AP Opportunities Act of 2020
DATE: February 4, 2020
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
COMMITTEE: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's local boards of education, supports Senate Bill 267, with amendments to ensure funding and clarify the income eligibility provisions.

MABE greatly appreciates this bill's proposal to establish a state funding source for the reimbursement of local school system costs of providing financial assistance to students taking critically important Advanced Placement (AP) assessments. The legislation would do so by pledging to provide funding in the annual State Budget in an amount sufficient to pay for AP tests for income-eligible students. MABE requests that amendments be considered to clarify the assurance of adequate State funding and to amend the income eligibility provisions.

MABE and local boards have been closely engaged in the development and implementation of Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards and the corresponding student assessments. Maryland adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2010, and then proceeded to adopt the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards and curricular framework. At the same time, the State Board decided to transition from the Maryland School Assessments (MSAs) and High School Assessments (HSAs) to new State assessments developed in conjunction with the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). However, as reflected in this bill, students take additional and very important assessments to demonstrate mastery in Advanced Placement courses. In fact, MABE has supported very similar legislation in the past, and appreciates the ongoing interest in providing additional resources to cover the costs of assessments which can earn students college credits.

The General Assembly has been actively engaged in guiding and monitoring the transition of the State's school and student performance accountability system. In 2013, Senate Bill 740, the College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act was enacted to establish a number of requirements regarding student assessments and courses aimed at increasing college and career readiness. More recently, the Kirwan Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education is recommending comprehensive funding and policy reforms. A primary objective of this effort is described as follows:

“Creating a World-class Instructional System: An internationally benchmarked curriculum that enables most students to achieve “college- and career-ready” status by the end of tenth grade and then pursue pathways that include early college, Advanced Placement courses, and/or a rigorous technical education leading to industry-recognized credentials and high-paying jobs.”

As local school systems continue to expand opportunities for students to pursue and master academic and career related knowledge and skills, providing equitable access to the assessments related to this work must be a priority. MABE believes that passage of this bill, and similar efforts regarding other assessments, will make a significant contribution toward the State's investment in the preparation of Maryland's students for successful transitions to college and career.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 267 with amendments.