

MDGA_SenatorHester_FAV_SB0231.pdf

Uploaded by: Hester, Katie

Position: FAV

KATIE FRY HESTER
Legislative District 9
Carroll and Howard Counties

Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Chair, Joint Committee on
Cybersecurity, Information Technology
and Biotechnology



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of SB231 - Public Schools - Cyber Safety Guide and Training Course
- Development, Implementation, and Reporting**

January 27th, 2021

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Thank you for your consideration of SB231. This simple bill directs the State Department of Education, the Maryland Department of Health, and the Behavioral Health Administration to consult with professionals who specialize in child development and child psychology to develop a cyber safety guide and training course as a resource for students, parents, and teachers grappling with the emergence of ubiquitous social media and technology usage in our daily lives. The guide will be developed in consultation with experts in child development and child psychology, and include information and best practices promoting responsible internet use through the prevention and management of:

- Cyberbullying
- Content depicting or encouraging self-harm
- Hate speech
- Graphic content
- Identity theft and cybersecurity threats
- Dissemination of false information
- Negative impacts of social media and technology usage on behavioral and physical health

The handbook will then be posted to the websites of the Department of Education, Department of Health, and the Behavioral Health Administration, and distributed to each county board of education for their own use.

Over the past year, more of our lives have been spent online than ever. While we've all taken necessary steps to slow the spread of COVID, we have depended on technology for work, school, and to connect with one another. For those of us with children, I'm sure you've noticed just how much our children are online now as compared to just a year ago - and this is not a new trend.

Over the interim in 2019, the Joint Committee on Cybersecurity, IT, and Biotechnology had the pleasure of being joined by Dr. Jacob Swartz - a Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellow at Georgetown University Hospital, and Dr. Steven Czinn from the University of Maryland School of Medicine. Their research has been focused specifically on the issue of teen tech and social media use, and during their testimony they noted, among teens, technology had become a constant presence. 95% of teens in 2018 had access to a smartphone, 45% were online at almost all times, and over 90% used a social media platform. While the same data for the past year is not currently available, prior to COVID those figures were on an upward trajectory year over year. Simultaneous with the growing prominence of this technology over the last 5-8 years, suicide rates across 10 to 14, 14 to 18, and 18 to 21 year old youth have increased at least 50%. Since 2010, the suicide rate has doubled for teen boys and tripled for teen girls.

Obviously the correlation between these trends and statistical points is not enough to warrant an assumption of causation. Suicide rates and mental and behavioral disorders are extremely complex and subject to a multitude of factors. But recent research has shown complex links between mental health and social media usage. In his testimony to our committee, Dr. Swartz made a point of highlighting that, when used in the right ways, our kids can see benefits from social media and technology. It truly can be a non-intrusive way to build social connections and engage in positive community building. However, when used improperly, social media and technology use can be invasive, addictive, isolating, and destructive.

Luckily, emerging research is beginning to point to steps we as a community can take to encourage healthy cyber practices for our kids. Simple steps like minimizing screen time early in life, participating in healthy patterns of co-use on the part of the parent, and modeling healthy screen use can make all the difference - but they do require knowledge of best practices and a concerted effort on all our parts to come together and address this complex public health issue.

Over the past year, many jurisdictions have done excellent work to promote healthy online practices for students. It is my intent that this handbook would draw upon emerging expertise in the fields of child psychology and development, as well as the experiences of our local school systems, to create a resource for parents, children, and teachers to draw on when attempting to address concerns of safe technology use in their daily lives. You will see in the fiscal note of the legislation that while MSDE estimates that general fund expenditures may increase by up to \$1.4 million if contractual services are necessary, the Department of Legislative Services notes that free modules and services are available to meet the requirements of the bill at reduced cost. DLS

also notes that development and distribution of the cyber safety guidebook can be achieved with existing resources. I believe this work is important to our constituents, and will be of great use to parents, teachers, and students attempting to balance the demands of an increasingly digital world with their own mental and behavioral well-being. For that reason **I respectfully request a favorable report on SB231.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Fry Hester". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Katie Fry Hester
Howard and Carroll Counties

SB0231 Cyber Safety Guide and Training Course_MHAM

Uploaded by: Quinlan, Margo

Position: FAV

**Senate Bill 231 Public Schools - Cyber Safety Guide and Training Course - Development,
Implementation, and Reporting**

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

January 27, 2021

Position: Support

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is the state's only volunteer, nonprofit citizen's organization that brings together consumers, families, professionals, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and mental illness. We appreciate this opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 231.

SB 231 seeks to require the State Department of Education, the Behavioral Health Administration within the Maryland Department of Health, the Maryland Center for School Safety, and the Department of Information Technology jointly to develop and publish a cyber safety guide and training course to be implemented in public schools. This is aimed at leveraging best practices to prevent and reduce instances of cyber bullying and harassment, with information and guidance for students in third through twelfth grades, parents, and school employees who interact with students. MHAMD supports this approach, as the US Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services similarly state that the most effective measures to reduce the incidences and impacts of cyberbullying often include the entire school community.¹

Cyberbullying impacts students on both ends of the relationship – research has shown that victims of cyberbullying report increased depressive affect, anxiety, loneliness, and suicidal behavior, and perpetrators also experience increased instances of substance use and aggression.² Cyberbullying also serves to further isolate already marginalized students: GLSEN's 2019 National School Climate Survey reports that almost 50% of TLGBQ students experienced electronic harassment, and demonstrates that TLGBQ students who reported more severe victimization regarding their sexual orientation or gender expression had lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of depression than those who reported less severe victimization.³

The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests caregivers engage in open discussions with young children and adolescents about their online behavior, and to actively participate in implementing

¹ StopBullying.gov., *Facts About Bullying*. <https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/facts>

² Nixon, C. *Current perspectives: The impact of cyberbullying on adolescent health*. Adolescent Health, Medicine and Therapeutics, 2014. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4126576/#b100-ahmt-5-143

³ Kosciw, J., Clark, C., Truong, N., & Zongrone, A., *The 2019 National School Climate Survey The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth in Our Nation's Schools*. GLSEN, 2019. <https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/NSCS19-111820.pdf>

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safeguards to protect youth from engaging in cyberbullying behaviors.⁴ By taking a wraparound approach in mandating training components for students, parents and school employees, SB 231 is following recommended guidelines and practices to create a standard of training which might best support Maryland students.

The Mental Health Association of Maryland supports the goals and intents of this bill and urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 231.

⁴ Schurgin O’Keeffe, G., Clarke-Pearson. K., *Council on Communications and Media Clinical report – the impact of social media on children, adolescents, and families*. Pediatrics, 2011.
<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/127/4/800>

Testimony in Support of SB231.pdf

Uploaded by: Ressler, Laurie

Position: FAV

Testimony in Support of SB231
Public Schools - Cyber Safety Guide and Training Course
- Development, Implementation, and Reporting

January 27, 2021

Good day, Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee. Thank you for allowing me to speak with you regarding SB231 and the development of a Cyber Safety Guide and Training Course for our public schools.

My name is Laurie Ressler, and I am the Technical Assistant for Media Technical Services in the Office of Instructional Technology and Library Media for the Howard County Public School System. I am a state-certified media specialist for grades K through 12, and I have taught library media and technology in Howard County elementary schools since 2011. I am speaking today as a professional educator and private citizen, and my opinions do not reflect those of the Howard County Public School System.

I have personally witnessed the explosive growth in the use of technology by our students at an increasingly younger age over the past ten years. This growth has been accelerated by the pandemic and virtual learning. But instruction in cyber safety and digital citizenship isn't something we just started doing since covid became our new normal. I'm extremely proud of the instruction I have helped create and implement on these subjects over the past decade. Our Office of Instructional Technology and Library Media has developed curricula with a solid grounding in best practices and current pedagogy for our K through 5 students in weekly Technology and Media classes, and for our secondary students through the Health and Library Media programs. This instruction continues virtually. Our lessons meet not only Maryland digital learning standards, but also the standards of the International Society for Technology in Education and the American Association of School Librarians. Throughout the pandemic, my office has provided weekly virtual professional development so every Howard County technology teacher and media specialist is ready to help each student to become a safe, thoughtful, and productive digital citizen. Every child in Maryland deserves such a well-planned and -implemented learning experience.

We all want to ensure the safety and emotional and mental well-being of our students when using digital tools. But beyond that, we want our students to become more than just passive consumers of technology. We want them to strive to be critical thinkers and ethical creators and collaborators in our digital world. Everything we do drives toward that goal.

To this, the creation at the state level of a cyber safety guide and training program, drawing on the research of child psychology and technology experts, and made available to all public school jurisdictions, would be a valuable supplement for us as educators to draw upon as we continue to refine and improve our cyber safety and digital citizenship programs. I respectfully ask that you all support me and my fellow technology and media teachers across Maryland by supporting the passage of SB231. Thank you very much.

SB231_Balto City Bd of Sch Commissioners_UFAV_Ster

Uploaded by: Sterrette, Dawana Merritt

Position: UNF

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Brandon M. Scott
Mayor, City of Baltimore

Linda Chinnia
*Chair, Baltimore City Board
of School Commissioners*

Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises
Chief Executive Officer

**Testimony of the
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
In Opposition of
Senate Bill 231 – Public Schools
Cyber Safety Guide and Training Courses – Development,
Implementation, and Reporting**

January 20, 2021

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners understands the need for cyber safety and has implemented procedures to direct appropriate actions of student and staff, therefore this legislation is not required.

City Schools' Instructional Media team has long provided resources to support teachers and students related to topics of cyberbullying and other aspects of digital citizenship. These student resources (including self-paced modules) are housed in a centralized hub for easy access, which is maintained and updated by staff. There are also policies as to the appropriate interaction between students and staff.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the team has increased resources and provided refresher opportunities regarding the topics outlined in the legislation. This legislation as presented, would incur operational costs due to the need to build in reporting features required in the legislation, either for the mentioned courses or for MSDE provided supports.

For the foregoing reasons, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners must oppose the legislation and request an unfavorable report.

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SB 231.Cyber Safety Course and Certificate.pdf

Uploaded by: Woolums, John

Position: UNF

BILL: Senate Bill 231
TITLE: Public Schools - Cyber Safety Guide and Training Course - Development, Implementation, and Reporting
DATE: January 27, 2021
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's local boards of education, opposes Senate Bill 231.

This bill addresses a very important issue, and one highlighted by the unprecedented utilization by all students of online learning throughout the school closures necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the bill proposes to mandate not only the development of a cyber safety guide but also a course of instruction to be offered in grades 3 through 12 beginning in the 2022-2023 school year. MABE has no objection to the joint efforts of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to develop resources for use in instruction and professional development regarding safe internet, social media, and technology usage.

As this committee knows, MABE opposes efforts by the General Assembly to legislate curriculum, firmly believing that this role belongs to local boards of education in conjunction with the State Board. Therefore, MABE's opposition to this bill does not rest on an evaluation of the merits of teaching any specified subject matter, but rather the opposition to statutorily mandating the teaching of any one concept or content item.

In creating the State Board and local boards of education, the General Assembly has delegated to them the responsibility for developing curriculum and administering assessments. The State Board establishes State standards and statewide graduation requirements; the local boards implement locally-developed curriculum to ensure that standards are met and students are prepared to meet graduation requirements. State and local assessment programs ensure that all students, schools, and school systems are held accountable for their work.

Therefore, in the context of recognizing the essential role of the state legislature in enacting laws which establish the framework for key elements of the State's approach to public education, MABE continues to support local decision-making authority in developing and implementing curriculum and courses of instruction.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 231.