

# BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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**Testimony of the  
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners  
In Opposition of  
Senate Bill 243 – Public High Schools –  
Health Education – Gambling Dangers and Addiction**

**January 20, 2021**

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners must oppose Senate Bill 243, even though it is discretionary. Currently, Baltimore City Public Schools do not offer a curriculum on gambling addiction. In order to provide such a curriculum, we would need to update existing curriculum, create and distribute new materials, and provide training to staff. To make a curriculum discretionary, knowing that the school system would not be able to place it into a city-wide curriculum because of other demands is not beneficial to anyone.

This legislation would also have an impact on the health education program because it would require the school system to prioritize gambling addiction education in a landscape where there are many other high priority topics like: consent education, opioid use, abuse and assault prevention education, hands-only CPR, diabetes prevention, dental health, and healthy eating education. While discretionary, adding gambling addiction education would further reduce instruction time of other core concepts of health education and limit the time students have available to develop the skills required to meet national health education standards.

As history, staff members of City Schools recalls in the 2014-2015 time frame there were 5-7 schools that participated in a study through a gambling addiction program at the Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling. This program was not in the curriculum of City Schools and was merely a study that this center used for research and it is not ongoing.

Current law requires community schools to have a community school coordinator at certain poverty thresholds. Currently schools with 80% or more of its student body in concentrated poverty must become a community school with a coordinator. This number will go down to 55% should Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation be overridden. Current law also requires that each community school coordinator develop a plan to address the needs of its student body. Should the community coordinator believe that gambling addiction is potentially a concern, the coordinator can find an outside partner to provide services to those students.

For the foregoing reasons, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners opposes Senate Bill 243 and urges an unfavorable report.

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