

BILL: Senate Bill 231
TITLE: Public Schools - Cyber Safety Guide and Training Course - Development, Implementation, and Reporting
DATE: January 20, 2021
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
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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.