

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 548
Public Schools—Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention Surveys—Revisions

House Ways and Means Committee

March 31, 2021

1:30 pm

Tina N. Dove, M.Ed.
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 548, which would revise the procedures used by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) related to the administration of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Survey/Youth Tobacco Survey that is administered to public middle school and high school students by, among other things, including questions in the survey related to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and positive childhood experiences

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

MSEA believes that every Maryland child is a whole child—one that needs to feel healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged in order to eventually see success in college, career and life. In advocating for the needs of the whole child, MSEA members advocate to ensure that every public school in our state is a great public school—one that has updated technology; small, manageable classes; safe and modern school buildings; proper healthcare and nutrition; and highly qualified and highly effective educators. Given access to these resources, we know all of Maryland's students can achieve their full potential.

We have been staunch supporters of the effort to bring trauma-informed practices into our schools because we recognize the toll trauma takes on all members of the school community—students and adults alike. We know that failure to address this trauma leads to disrupted school environments for all.

We have time and again experienced the adverse impact ACEs can have on the lives of our students, their families, and our communities. Given the current and future impacts we expect will result from the COVID-19 global pandemic, we believe very strongly that every step must be taken to prepare our schools, our communities, and our state for what lies ahead; and that these efforts must commence with an appropriate sense of urgency.

As we look to the myriad ways in which to properly assess and triage the trauma our students have experienced and continue to experience, we believe that using a tool already in our toolbox—the CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey—as one means by which to perform this assessment is a fantastic way to not only get a snap shot of how our youth are doing now but to monitor their progress overtime as we continue with our efforts to mitigate and remediate the mental, behavioral, and social-emotional harm they have suffered.

Addressing our children’s trauma is mission critical if we are to set them on the path toward healthy and successful futures. Understanding the ACEs they have experienced is a first step in addressing this trauma and in building the trauma-responsive policies, programs, and supports they need.

We urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 548.