

BILL: House Bill 237
TITLE: State Department of Education - Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices - Guidance and Assistance
POSITION: OPPOSE
DATE: January 20, 2021
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means Committee
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 237 and supports the ongoing implementation of the reforms enacted in 2019 in the important policy area of identifying and responding to students with reading disabilities and challenges, including dyslexia.

In 2019, after deliberations through multiple legislative sessions, the legislature enacted a new law to require, beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, each local school board to ensure that students are screened to identify if the student is at risk for reading difficulties. Under the new law, if the screening results indicate that the student is at risk of reading difficulties, the local board must provide supplemental reading instruction, as appropriate, and provide a notification letter to the student's parent as specified. Furthermore, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must develop and update resources for local boards every four years and provide technical support to local boards allowing them to provide training opportunities annually. In addition, local boards must report annually to MSDE beginning with the 2020-2021 school year. The bill took effect on July 1, 2019.

As this Committee knows, MABE generally opposes efforts by the General Assembly to legislate curriculum, courses of instruction, assessments, or graduation requirements, firmly believing that this role belongs to local boards of education in conjunction with the State Board of Education. Exceptions to this rule are rare. In creating the State Board and local boards of education, the General Assembly has delegated to them the responsibility for guiding and delivering a high quality statewide system of public education through state standards and accountability measures, and locally governed and administered curriculum, teaching, and learning.

MABE appreciates the intent of this legislation to further the objectives of the legislation recently passed in 2019. However, in light of the ongoing implementation of the 2019 law, and the looming challenges for MSDE in implementing the many facets of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation, MABE respectfully requests that no new educational programs be established at this time.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 237.