

HB1163 FAV - Del Washington Testimony.pdf

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Position: FAV



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of HB 1163 - Primary and Secondary Education - Virtual Education
- Requirements**

HB 1163 is comprehensive legislation that aims to remedy the learning loss suffered by our students as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as equip our state for high-quality virtual education when circumstances require its implementation.

It is clear that our state and local education systems were ill-prepared for the sudden transition to remote learning as a consequence of COVID-19. HB 1163 provides robust infrastructure to ensure our school systems are prepared and adequately equipped when students are required to learn remotely. This ongoing preparation is key to ensuring that students don't lose valuable learning time.

Specifically, this comprehensive virtual learning legislation would:

Equip Teachers

- Establish a set of best practices and standards that teachers would have to adhere to during periods of virtual instruction;
- Require teachers to undergo frequent training and professional development on these best practices and standards; and
- Provide teachers with the tools necessary to record asynchronous lectures so that class time can be used for engaging students in collaborative peer-to-peer work.

Expand Virtual Learning Infrastructure

- Create a universal learning management system for all Maryland schools to use and ensure it implements the Kirwan curriculum standards;
- Allow county Boards of Education to elect for schools to transition to virtual learning in the case of a sustained event that prevents normal in-person attendance over a period of multiple days;
- Expand computer security infrastructure for virtual education; and
- Encourage the establishment of in-person learning centers when possible to provide students with a physical learning location during a period of virtual learning.

Comprehensively Engage Students and Their Families

- Require that county boards have an equity plan for schools that transition to virtual learning, including methods to accurately measure attendance, continue physical education, accommodate the needs of students with disabilities, and provide additional

tutoring and learning time to at-risk students including ELLs, low-income students, and students with disabilities;

- Require that school staff check in with students individually at least once a week, and multiple times a week for struggling students; and
- Require that schools develop culturally appropriate parent engagement plans and provide as much information as possible about scheduling and available services to parents in their native language.

The passage of HB 1163 is specifically important to further the State's goals regarding educational equity. Black and Brown/low-income families are disproportionately being impacted by the pandemic. Data has shown that these communities are at a higher risk of infection, death, income/job loss, food/housing insecurity, and have a lack of access to technology/internet. All of these factors contribute to learning loss. Barriers to educational equity for Black and Brown/low-income students and students with disabilities have been exacerbated by the pandemic and virtual learning. It is our responsibility as a legislature to address these disparities and gaps in opportunity.

This sweeping legislation would prepare our educators and our schools to minimize the real and devastating effects of learning loss. In a time where we can see a distinct and unprecedented widening of the achievement gap as our most vulnerable students—students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities—succumb to the difficulties of remote learning, it is our imperative to do everything we can to ensure that this never happens again.

For those reasons, I strongly urge a favorable report on HB 1163.

HB 1163.Virtual School Platform and Programs.pdf

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: FWA

BILL: House Bill 1163
TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education - Virtual Education - Requirements
DATE: March 9, 2022
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports the intent of House Bill 1163 to build a framework for a robust statewide approach to ensuring access for all students to high quality virtual learning. However, given the breadth and scope of the many complex provisions of this legislation, and the stakeholder input being provided on closely related Senate legislation, MABE requests amendments aligned with the concerns raised last session and to reflect the need for alignment with the currently pending Senate Bill 362.

Specifically, MABE has identified the following issues of concern with House Bill 1163, including: the intent of the “flip the classroom” asynchronous learning system pilot, the role of the statewide universal learning management system, the distinctions between permanent and temporary virtual schools, and the need for a separate temporary virtual school administrative office and other mandated staffing provisions. Clearly, this is a comprehensive and therefore complex piece of legislation; a bill proposing major modifications to the existing law which local boards believe provides significant authority and flexibility for local school systems to establish virtual schools.

MABE participated in extensive discussions and deliberations on amendments to this legislation in the 2021 legislative session. In this context, MABE looks forward to engaging constructively in the dialogue on legislation in the 2022 session to make reasonable improvements and clarifications to the processes for state review and approval and local operation of virtual schools.

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated widespread home-based virtual learning and has highlighted a long-documented and persistent inequity of students that lack adequate broadband access. This digital divide, commonly known as the homework gap, impacts millions of students across the nation, and families and students in each of Maryland’s 24 local jurisdictions and school systems. The equity issues arising from virtual learning must continue to be of the highest priority in crafting a new statewide approach to virtual learning.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 1163 in the context of aligning it with Senate Bill 362 and the type of amendments described above.

HB1163 Virtual Education 3.9.22.pdf

Uploaded by: Jeanette Ortiz

Position: INFO



HB1163 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION - VIRTUAL EDUCATION – REQUIREMENTS

March 9, 2022

WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Jeanette Ortiz, Esq., Legislative & Policy Counsel (410.703.5352)

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) is submitting a letter of information on **HB1163 Primary and Secondary Education - Virtual Education - Requirements**. The bill requires the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board to design a certain course of training in the pedagogy of virtual education. It requires MSDE to provide local school systems with guidance related to the periodic professional development and support for teachers to achieve virtual education best practice principles. The bill also establishes the Flip the Classroom Pilot.

AACPS appreciates the bill's intent to expand virtual learning opportunities for Maryland students. The district believes that there is value in a statewide uniform approach and in the additional clarity around the use of virtual learning – whether temporary or permanent – in a crisis. AACPS also appreciates the standards, resources, and professional development that are offered in the legislation. However, given the significant input AACPS and other stakeholders have provided on SB362 Primary and Secondary Education – Virtual Schools – Revisions, the committee should consider amendments aligned with the concerns raised last below and SB362.

It is important to note that local school systems are already fully authorized to provide appropriate virtual learning opportunities under existing State law. In fact, AACPS is currently looking to build a virtual school option for current home instruction students as a program of choice in the upcoming school year for targeted middle and high school students who have been successfully enrolled in home instruction. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in statewide school facility closures which compelled the immediate transition to distance learning through access to online platforms and other instructional materials from mid-March 2020 to the present. It is also important to recognize that school systems already do many of the things identified in the bill during the current virtual environment. For example, AACPS has equity and attendance plans, has a process to provide a free and appropriate education to students with disabilities, provides students with access to the same curriculum and standards, provides regular assessments, conducts regular check-ins with students, provides for virtual tutoring, has a plan to focus on students with the greatest need and the most learning loss, and uses multiple methods of communications amongst many other things.

With regard to the Flip the Classroom Pilot Program established under the bill, AACPS believes that a local school system should be the entity determining whether a school or schools participate in the program. Accordingly, the bill should be amended to provide this option to a local school system in lieu of a school independently making this choice as provided in Section 7-128(d)(2) of the bill. Similarly, AACPS recommends that the language in Section 7-1406(a)(1) authorizing a school administrator of a temporary virtual school to establish learning centers be amended to authorize a local school system to establish

additional learning centers. Alternatively, this language can be stricken in its entirety as school systems are already authorized to establish learning centers.

AACPS does have concerns that this legislation will have a fiscal impact and, therefore, creates an unfunded mandate. For example, AACPS would be required to hire a dedicated employee to coordinate the use of the universal management system. AACPS is also concerned that a shift to a universal management system would be costly. Local school systems around the State currently have learning management systems in place in their respective districts. In fact, AACPS recently procured a learning management system at a cost of \$1 million. As such, it is imperative that statewide universal learning management system selected by MSDE be compatible with the existing learning management systems utilized by the 24 local education agencies.

AACPS also has questions regarding the provision in the bill that would require a temporary administrative office in the State for a temporary virtual school. Presumably, this school would already be in the county and the administrator and staff would be accommodated as any other administrator and staff is currently accommodated by a local school system.

Thank you for consideration of this information regarding HB1163.