

BILL: House Bill 739
TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education – Full-Time Equivalent Enrollment Count – Alterations (Truancy Reduction Act of 2023)
POSITION: OPPOSE
DATE: March 14, 2023
COMMITTEE: Appropriations
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 739.

MABE opposes this bill because it would unnecessarily shift from Maryland’s current method of counting enrollment on September 30 of each school year to a method that would rely on the “average daily attendance” method for calculating of student enrollment during the school year. MABE strongly supports maintaining the current methodology for counting students enrolled in public schools for the purpose of determining state and local aid amounts in the following fiscal year.

The result of this bill, based on the analysis of similar proposals made in the past, would be to reduce the state’s total obligation to fund public education, particularly in those jurisdictions with higher rates of student absenteeism. Local boards place a very high priority on regular student attendance, and implementing programs to prevent, reduce, and respond to instances of chronic absenteeism. House Bill 739 would reduce state funding based on the rate of absenteeism, the very indicator that school systems are required to respond to with additional resources. School systems experiencing higher rates of absenteeism through the school year would be those most negatively affected by the reduced funding driven by lower enrollment counts taken later in the school year.

Similar legislation has been introduced and rejected several times over the years, presumably based largely on the negative impacts of the loss of revenue that would result from the shift to average daily attendance. Importantly, education commissions dedicated to reforming public school finance have never adopted a recommendation to shift to average daily attendance.

For these reasons, MABE urges the Committee to adopt an unfavorable report on House Bill 739.