

**BILL:** House Bill 515  
**TITLE:** Public Schools – Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings – Requirements  
**DATE:** April 4, 2023  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**COMMITTEE:** Education, Energy, and the Environment  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 515 because, even as amended, it would continue to impose unreasonably restrictive conditions on the administration of active shooter drills and trainings, mandate that schools provide mental health services to students and staff following these drills and trainings, and impose an additional unfunded mandate to distribute safe gun storage materials to all parents.

MABE is particularly concerned with the mandate to “provide” mental health follow-up for students and school personnel after an active shooter drill or training. Schools are not intended, organized or staffed in a manner suited to serving as a primary mental health provider, certainly not to staff. Therefore, MABE urges consideration of modifying this mandate to clarify that the role of the school would be to provide a mental health follow-up for students and to “provide resources to facilitate the provision of a mental health care for school personnel” after a drill or training. Similarly, the bill would require schools to “collect data on the effectiveness and psychological impact of active shooter drills and trainings.” This mandate lies wholly outside the purview of local school systems and school administrators, and would unduly burden the very school personnel dedicated to serving the mental and behavioral health needs of students.

House Bill 515 would continue to limit active shooter drills using persons portraying an active shooter, and using loud sounds, to exercises after school hours and made voluntary to any students or staff. MABE is especially concerned that such limitations could unduly limit the ability of school systems to train staff in their roles and responsibilities in preparation for responding to an actual active shooter incident. MABE supports maintaining the law and regulations governing school system emergency preparedness, including the requirements to develop emergency plans and conduct emergency drills, including active shooter drills. Local boards are concerned that the limitations imposed by House Bill 515 would unduly limit local discretion to provide the array of necessary emergency preparedness drills in conjunction with local law enforcement agencies, fire officials, and others.

The Safe to Learn Act, bipartisan legislation passed in 2018 in response to national and Maryland experiences with school shootings, called on the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in consultation with the School Safety Subcabinet, to adopt regulations to incorporate in the annual schedule of the drills described above, developmentally and age-appropriate components of: (1) the active shooter preparedness program developed by the Department of Homeland Security or guidelines; or (2) the active shooter guidelines adopted by the Maryland Active Assailant Work Group (Ed. Art. § 7-1509). The law also provides that active shooter drills “may include developmentally and age-appropriate procedures for students or school personnel in: (1) securing classrooms; (2) barricading classrooms and school entries; (3) taking refuge in the classroom; and (4) when appropriate, escape from the classroom or school.” MABE believes these components, and the local discretion to craft exercises that cover them, strikes the appropriate balance of state guidance and local flexibility.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 515.