



Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate,
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 14, 2023

Board of Education
of Howard County

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SB0799: FAVORABLE W/AMENDMENTS
Public Schools - Cyber Safety Guide - Development, Usage, and Reporting

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **SB0799 Public Schools - Cyber Safety Guide - Development, Usage, and Reporting** as a tool available to local school systems to address cyber safety.

Differing from prior versions of this bill that included training courses for students, parents, and employees, SB0799 focuses solely on the creation of a cyber safety guide by the Maryland State Department of Education, the Behavioral Health Administration within the Maryland Department of Health, the Maryland Center for School Safety (the Center) and the Department of Information Technology that would be made available to local schools. To be developed in consultation with professionals who specialize in child development and child psychology, the guide would be required to address such topics as responsible internet use, cyberbullying, identity theft, and the impacts of social media and technology on behavioral and physical health.

Availability of a cyber safety guide as called for in SB0799 would be a welcome venture that has the potential to positively impact instruction in the classroom, as well as general cybersecurity knowledge in the community. This resource would bring a collective and cross-professional perspective that could be referenced by teachers, parents, or staff in the course of existing school system operations. At the elementary level, current instructional technology courses in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) include a Digital Citizen component that enables students to recognize the rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of living, learning, and working in an interconnected digital world, and how to act in ways that are safe, legal, and ethical. At the secondary level, curriculum throughout a variety of subjects include these same digital citizenship skills. HCPSS Information Technology staff have also included the implementation of a security awareness training platform for staff as part of the Information Technology Strategic plan.

To strengthen the potential benefit of a cyber safety guide, HCPSS staff and the Board suggests that development requirements for the guide include the use of relevant scientific research, content tailored to specific audiences, as well as regular updates to ensure content does not become outdated due to the ever-changing world of technology.

With the above additions, we urge a FAVORABLE report of SB0799 from this Committee.