



PSSAM
Public School Superintendents' Association
OF MARYLAND

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BILL: SB 837

TITLE: Education – Curriculum – Study of the Holocaust (Educate to Stop the Hate Act)

DATE: February 22, 2023

POSITION: Oppose

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four local school superintendents, **opposes** Senate Bill 837.

Senate Bill 837 would require the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop new guidelines, as well as revise and enhance existing instruction, regarding topics surrounding the Holocaust in all of Maryland's public schools. This bill would also require all twenty-four county boards of education to dedicate Title II funds for professional development related to teaching the history of the Holocaust.

PSSAM has a longstanding policy of opposing efforts by the General Assembly to codify curriculum standards, assessments, or graduation requirements. Local superintendents strongly believe that the role of curriculum development and implementation belongs solely to local boards of education in conjunction with MSDE. Rest assured, PSSAM's opposition to this bill does not rest on an evaluation of the merits of teaching any specified subject matter, but rather opposition to statutorily mandating revisions to content standards and curriculum.

The Maryland General Assembly, in creating the Maryland State Board of Education and local boards of education, has delegated to them the responsibility of delivering a high-quality statewide system of public education through State standards and accountability measures, as well as locally governed and administered curriculum. The State Board establishes State content frameworks, state assessment standards, and minimum state graduation requirements, while each local board and school system implement locally-developed curriculum to ensure that the state

content frameworks are followed, student performance standards are met, and students are prepared to meet graduation requirements.

In the context of educational programming proposed by Senate Bill 837, PSSAM emphasizes that many local school systems already incorporate age-appropriate materials on topics such as the Holocaust into a comprehensive social studies curriculum. Superintendents are committed to providing students with a comprehensive, well-rounded education through history curriculum that is implemented after proper stakeholder input is received and review processes are completed in each individual system. However, seeing as though this bill would require all local systems to divert Title II funds from other programs in order to accommodate the prescriptive professional development required under the bill's current language, this bill will create budgetary hardships for all twenty-four local systems.

Again, PSSAM's opposition to this bill does not rest on the merits of instruction pertaining to the Holocaust. Rather, it rests on the implications of curricular mandates on local school systems. Senate Bill 837, alongside similar bills which seek to interject or extract piecemeal segments of the curriculum, only serve to weaken the effectiveness of the overall educational curriculum.

For these reasons, PSSAM **opposes** Senate Bill 837 and urges an unfavorable report.