



HB461 EDUCATION – SEXUAL ABUSE AND ASSAULT AWARENESS AND PREVENTION PROGRAM – HUMAN AND SEX TRAFFICKING

April 4, 2023

EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

OPPOSE

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) opposes **HB461 Education – Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention Program – Human and Sex Trafficking**. This bill requires the Maryland State Board of Education and nonpublic schools that hold a certificate of approval from the State Board and participate in the Nonpublic Schools Textbook and Technology Grants Program to develop and implement a program of age-appropriate education on the awareness of sexual abuse and assault that includes, for students in grades 6 through 8, material promoting awareness and prevention of human and sex trafficking.

Maryland schools provide their students with a comprehensive prekindergarten – 12 health education curriculum that focuses on a student’s development of protective life skills and promotes health and well-being. As part of this comprehensive health education curriculum, AACPS students are educated in Family Life and Human Sexuality as well as Safety and Violence Prevention. Students participate in age-appropriate instruction on the awareness and prevention of sexual abuse and assault. This instruction includes age-appropriate education on the meaning of consent and respect for personal boundaries.

While this legislation is well-intentioned, AACPS opposes efforts by the General Assembly to legislate local public school curriculum or assessments. The authority to establish curriculum and assessments is the domain of the State Board of Education and local boards of education, the same entities charged with researching, investigating, and evaluating both curriculum and assessments. Maintaining this authority with the State Board and local boards allows local boards of education to collaborate with the State and stakeholders to ensure that all students, schools, and school systems are held accountable.

AACPS is committed to an ongoing and thorough review of curricula and materials of instruction to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion are promoted and evident. AACPS has a committee that reviews curriculum and materials of instruction. Representatives from all stakeholder groups including parents/guardians, teachers, and students are included in the review process.

Again, AACPS’s opposition to this bill does not rest on an evaluation of the merits of teaching a particular subject matter, but rather the school system’s opposition to statutorily mandating the teaching of one concept of content item as was as the opposition of unfunded mandates.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on HB461.