

BILL: House Bill 266
TITLE: Public and Nonpublic Schools - Bronchodilator Availability and Use - Policies
DATE: March 22, 2023
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports House Bill 266 as amended in the House, with the exception of the reporting requirements for the use of inhalers in schools.

MABE greatly appreciates the amendments to this bill in uncodified Section 2 which will ensure that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) jointly update the outdated school health service guidelines for students with asthma. Also, MABE strongly supports the amendments adopted in the House to remove from this bill the provisions regarding the emergency use of injectable epinephrin.

MABE wants to assure the legislature that local school systems are already operating in accordance with Maryland law and School Health Services Guidelines that comprehensively address routine and emergency student health services (Sections 7-401 and 7-426 of the Education Article). Under the law, MSDE and the MDH must provide technical assistance to schools to: implement the adopted guidelines, train school personnel at the local level, and develop a process to monitor the implementation of the guidelines. State law also establishes the office of the school health services program coordinator, who is responsible for implementing State and local health policies in the public schools. Key responsibilities of the school health coordinator include ensuring that public schools adhere to local health services guidelines and communicating State and local health policies to the parents and guardians of public school students.

MABE has a track record of supporting legislation in recent years to ensure that school health guidelines are updated and strengthened, including bills enacted to ensure that school health plans adequately address students with diabetes and students with sickle cell disease. These bills were crafted to ensure a high degree of care and heightened awareness among school personnel regarding the needs of students with diabetes, sickle cell disease, and other health conditions including seizure disorders.

Local boards of education place a very high priority on student health, by ensuring that schools are operating in accordance with adopted state school health guidelines and local policies and procedures intended to provide a health and safe school environment conducive to student learning. As amended, Senate Bill 266 should ensure that the well-intended policy changes underlying this legislation will be addressed through updating the State guidelines regarding asthma and the use of inhalers.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 266, with an amendment to strike lines 6 through 14 on page 9 of the bill.