

BILL: Senate Bill 980
TITLE: Education - Computer Science - Content Standards and Requirements
POSITION: OPPOSE
DATE: March 6, 2024
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes Senate Bill 980, which would not only mandate updated state standards for instruction in computer science, including the role of artificial intelligence (AI), but also mandate a major expansion of computer science instruction in public elementary and middle schools.

Generally, MABE opposes efforts by the General Assembly to legislate curriculum, courses of instruction, assessments, or graduation requirements, firmly believing that this role belongs to local boards of education in conjunction with the State Board of Education. Exceptions to this rule are rare. In creating the State Board and local boards of education, the General Assembly has delegated to them the responsibility for guiding and delivering a high-quality statewide system of public education through state standards and accountability measures, and locally governed and administered curriculum, teaching, and learning.

MABE recognizes and shares the General Assembly's strong support for computer science education. In 2018, legislation was enacted to require all public high schools to offer at least one high-quality computer science course beginning in the 2021-2022 school year. MABE supported this legislation as amended and greatly appreciates the initiative to establish and fund the Maryland Center for Computing Education to support much needed computer science-related professional development. The Center provides professional development, curriculum resources, and computer science education mentorships. At present, the Center is offering professional development for educators on artificial intelligence and on teaching cybersecurity.

Regarding artificial intelligence (AI), local boards of education recognize the importance of adopting statewide guidelines and local policies and procedures informed by this guidance to facilitate the optimal use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the educational setting. This is why MABE is supporting legislation such as Senate Bill 979.

Again, MABE's opposition to Senate Bill 980 does not rest on an evaluation of the merits of teaching any specified subject matter, certainly not computer science, but rather on the association's opposition to legislation proposing to mandate or modify curriculum, course requirements, assessments, or high school graduation requirements.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 980.