

INFORMATIONAL
House Bill 620
Education – Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention Program – Human
and Sex Trafficking

Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
April 2, 2024

Lauren Lamb
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association offers this informational testimony on House Bill 620, which would require that courses covering information on the awareness and prevention of sexual abuse and assault would also include, for students in grades 6-8, material promoting the awareness and prevention of human and sex trafficking.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

MSEA tenaciously advocates for the policies and programs that will give our students access to the resources they need to achieve their full potential. We understand clearly that the health and safety of our students has a direct impact on their academic and nonacademic outcomes. However, MSEA has a longstanding concern about legislatively mandating curriculum. We believe that it is the purview of the MSDE and the State Board of Education to develop and implement curriculum standards to meet the academic needs of the students served in Maryland's public schools. It is then the responsibility of local districts to determine how best to implement a program of study that best serves the needs of their students.

We appreciate the intent of this legislation and the importance of the subject matter proposed. However, adding content to the health curriculum raises concern about the amount of content already required to be covered—particularly given that the course is only a ½ credit course—and how new subjects could best be incorporated. We believe that local boards and educators—particularly those who are health educators, mental and behavioral health educators, and health practitioners embedded within our schools—are best suited to address this issue and to determine how best to include it into currently required content.