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TITLE: HB 620 - Education - Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention
Program - Human and Sex Trafficking

DATE: April 2, 2024

POSITION: Unfavorable

COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

This bill requires that age-appropriate education program on the awareness and prevention of sexual abuse and assault be developed and implemented by the State Board of Education and certain nonpublic schools, for students in grades 6 through 8, material promoting the awareness and prevention of human and sex trafficking.

PSSAM is supportive of the intent of this bill, but must **oppose** due to our core philosophy that curriculum decisions are left to superintendents and their local boards of education. However, it is important to note that many local school systems are currently incorporating these important topics in their health curriculum.

Under current law each local school system must provide a comprehensive health education program for all students in prekindergarten through grade 8, and offer an education program in grades 9 through 12 that enables students to meet graduation requirements, and to select health education electives. In order to graduate from a public high school in Maryland, students must complete one credit of health; this was changed from a half credit requirement two years ago. Moving to a full credit will give additional time to address the specific concerns of human and sex trafficking without a mandate from the Legislature.

PSSAM thanks the sponsor for his interest and advocacy but firmly believes decisions regarding curriculum belong to superintendents and local boards of education working together with the State Board of Education.