

KAREN R. TOLES, J.D.
Legislative District 25
Prince George's County

Judiciary Committee

Subcommittees

Civil Law and Procedure

Public Safety



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 203
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3524 · 301-858-3524
800-492-7122 Ext. 3524
Karen.Toles@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 8, 2024

**FAVORABLE: HB1485 – Public Schools – Water Safety and Swimming Course-
Established**

**TO: Chair Vanessa Atterbeary, Vice Chair Jheanelle Wilkins and Members of the Ways
and Means Committee**

House Bill 1485 is requiring the State Board of Education to develop a curriculum content standards, for a course of water safety and swimming for public school students in certain grades, requiring the county boards of certain education to implement the water safety and swimming course for students in certain grades in certain schools in the county; and generally relating to a course on water safety and swimming in public schools. This bill does a few things:

- 1. It asks for the curriculum to be developed by July 2025.**
- 2. Starting in 2026-2027 school year, each county shall implement a course on water safety and swimming.**
- 3. This bill would allow for physical education credit, to be given to students for a who successfully completes the course.**
- 4. If a public school does not have a swimming pool, they may partner with their local park and recreation facilities, local YMCA's or other aquatic facilities located in their community.**

Historically, Black Americans due to chattel slavery, and other discriminatory laws that prohibited African Americans access to pools across the United States- created a generation of black kids who have not learned how to swim or have proper water safety skills that will ensure their survival.

Due to years of aquatic inequity Black People are 5.5 times more likely to drown than non -black individuals, thus the necessity for teaching our children a lifesaving skill. Swimming taught in our school system as a curriculum would save lives in our community!

According to USA Swimming, less than 1.5% of the Country's nearly 300,000 competitive swimmers are black. It is time to change that narrative.

Water Safety and swimming should be **equitable**, and the best way to establish equity is to offer all our children in Maryland a chance to learn water safety, as part of a curriculum in our public schools.

I ask for your **Favorable Support on HB1485**. Thank you for your time and please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have.

Thank you for your and consideration,



Delegate Karen R. Toles, District 25