
TO: House Ways and Means Committee

BILL: House Bill (HB) 620 - Education - Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention Program - Human and Sex Trafficking

DATE: February 14, 2024

POSITION: Oppose

Chair Atterbeary and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) respectfully oppose **HB 620**, which would require Maryland’s Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and non-public schools that receive textbook and technology grants to incorporate instructional materials for students in grades 6 through 8 that promote the awareness of human and sex trafficking in their health education curriculum.

We do not oppose this legislation based on the merits of the proposed subject matter but on the grounds that the legislative requirement would be duplicative of current regulatory requirements and run counter to the process that is entrusted to the State Board, MSDE, and LEAs.

While the State Board and MSDE are supportive of the fundamental principles outlined in the requirements of the bill, the State Board and MSDE have an established process for reviewing, revising, and adopting standards, frameworks, and curricular resources. Both entities are strident in ensuring that the inclusion of content-specific curricular resources is conducted through this process, which includes collaboration between the State Board, MSDE, the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), LEAs, national subject matter experts, and stakeholders.

Separate processes and timelines for the review and approval of standards, frameworks, and curricular resources could be counterproductive to both MSDE and LEAs. HB 620 would allow for a short timeline for LEAs to complete the required curricular resource development, training, and procurement of new materials.

Beyond this, the established [Comprehensive Health Education Framework](#), written by a diverse group of content experts and stakeholders, includes research-based, age-appropriate topics and indicators for middle school students to learn about sexual mistreatment, grooming, harassment, abuse, assault, exploitation, and human trafficking, as required in this bill.

Further, COMAR 13A.04.18.02 supports the implementation of this framework as the regulation requires local superintendents to certify to the State Superintendent of Schools that the instructional programming within grades prekindergarten through 12 meets, at a minimum, the requirements of the Comprehensive Health Education Framework.

MSDE, in partnership with the State Board, MDH, teachers, supervisors, parents, institutions of higher education, and other stakeholders, will continue to undertake significant reviews of state standards and frameworks. In this process, MSDE will be certain to include our critical partners in the General Assembly.

The State Board and the Department request that the committee consider this information on **HB 620**. Please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne, Executive Director of Government Affairs, Education Policy, and Government Relations, at Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov or at 410-767-0504 or Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, at Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov or at 443-915-6094, if you would like any additional information.