



PSSAM
Public School Superintendents' Association
OF MARYLAND

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BILL: HB 1485
TITLE: Public Schools – Water Safety and Swimming Course – Established
DATE: March 11, 2024
POSITION: Unfavorable
COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means Committee
CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **opposes** House Bill 1485.

House Bill 1485 would require the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop curriculum content for an elective course in water safety and swimming for public school students in grades 8 through 12. Additionally, this bill would require local boards of education to implement the water safety and swimming curriculum content in all public middle and high schools beginning in the 2025-2026 school year. Furthermore, this bill authorizes schools to partner with local parks and recreation facilities in order to meet the objectives of the water safety curriculum.

PSSAM has a longstanding policy of opposing efforts by the General Assembly to codify curriculum standards, assessments, or graduation requirements. Local superintendents strongly believe that the role of curriculum development and implementation belongs solely to local boards of education in conjunction with MSDE. Rest assured, PSSAM's opposition to this bill is not an evaluation of the merits of teaching any specified subject matter, but rather opposition to statutorily mandating content standards and curriculum.

The Maryland General Assembly, in creating the Maryland State Board of Education and local boards of education, has delegated to these entities the responsibility of delivering a high-quality statewide system of public education. The State Board establishes State content frameworks, state assessment standards, and minimum state graduation requirements, while each local board and school system implements locally-developed curriculum to ensure that the state content

frameworks are followed, student performance standards are met, and students are prepared to meet graduation requirements.

Superintendents are committed to providing students with a comprehensive, well-rounded physical education curriculum that is implemented after proper stakeholder input and review processes. In addition to creating a mandated curriculum, this bill would also require local systems to use existing funds to implement the bill with no new funding source, therefore creating an unfunded mandate for all twenty-four local systems.

House Bill 1485, alongside similar bills that seek to interject or extract piecemeal segments of the curriculum, only serve to weaken the effectiveness of the overall educational curriculum. Again, PSSAM's opposition to this bill does not rest on the merits of instruction pertaining to water safety and swimming, but the bill's imposition of curricular mandates on local school systems.

For these reasons, PSSAM **opposes** House Bill 1485 and requests an unfavorable report.