



# Maryland Education Coalition



Ellie Mitchell & Rick Tyler, Jr. – Co-Chairs

Web site - [www.marylandeducationcoalition.org](http://www.marylandeducationcoalition.org) \*\*\* Email - [md.education.coaliton@gmail.com](mailto:md.education.coaliton@gmail.com)

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January 17, 2024

**BILL:** HB0074-Public Schools - Lifesaver Schools Program – Establishment

**COMMITTEE:** House Ways and Means

**POSITION:** Favorable w/amendments

The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) was originally founded over 40 years ago and is made up of over twenty statewide organizations and individual advocates with extensive experience. (see below). We advocate for adequate funding, equitable policies, and transparent accountability for the estimated 900,000 diverse students\* in Maryland's public schools, regardless of their academic, cultural, economic, geographic, racial, or other demographic status.

MEC supports healthy lifestyles for students, staff, and families including physical activity, behavioral/mental health, and instruction. All students must have access to social-emotional education and services as well as character development. We expect all schools to meet National School Nutrition Standards. All policies must include stakeholders in the decision-making process. Student health records must be kept updated, accessible, but secure.

MEC believes that many school communities will lack the expertise and resources in order to implement all of the proposed requirements of the Lifesaver program. Therefore, the proposed Lifesaver Schools Program must require a sharing of responsibility and resources between the Maryland Department of Education and Department of Health since each has various areas of experience, resources and staffing that will be required to administer and implement the program within as many school systems and schools as possible, especially within school communities statewide with the greatest needs, but fewer access to the resources and services required to meet each of the defined requirements in the proposed Lifesaver Schools Program.

Therefore, we request the following amendments of proposed Statue 7-135 Section:

- (C) (1) THE DEPARTMENT **OF EDUCATION** SHALL ADMINISTER THE **PROGRAM IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH EXPERTISE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES**
- (E) A PUBLIC SCHOOL MAY PARTNER WITH THE COUNTY BOARD, **LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT OR APPROVED OUTSIDE VENDOR**, TO FULFILL THE DEPARTMENT'S CRITERIA TO QUALIFY AS A LIFESAVER SCHOOL.

In closing, the Maryland Education Coalition supports programs and services that support physical, mental, nutritional, and environmental health and urges a favorable report with amendments for HB74-Lifesavers Schools Program.