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BILL: HB 763

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

DATE: March 20, 2025

POSITION: Unfavorable

COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four local school superintendents **opposes** House Bill 763.

This bill requires that the State Board and each nonpublic school in the State shall develop and implement a program of age-appropriate education on the awareness and prevention of sexual abuse and assault. The program shall be taught by a teacher who is trained to provide instruction on the awareness of sexual abuse and assault and be incorporated into the health curriculum of each county board and each nonpublic school. It also includes for students in grades 6 through 8, material promoting the awareness and prevention of human and sex trafficking. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.

Local superintendents strongly support robust and comprehensive instruction in age-appropriate health education, including topics covered in this legislation, and believe that the intent of this bill is already being met.

According to the MSDE, comprehensive health education has been a feature of Maryland education regulation since 1970. In this framework, concepts and skills related to family life and human sexuality must be age-appropriate and taught by teachers who have had additional preparation in the content and teaching methods of the material. New health education standards were adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education in December 2019 and the [Maryland State Framework for Comprehensive Health Education](#) was revised based on those standards.

This framework was created by the State Board and MSDE in partnership with the Maryland Department of Health, LEAs, national experts, and stakeholders to rigorously review, revise, and adopt standards, frameworks, and curricular resources. *The updated grade 7 standards require students to analyze laws, policies, and consequences related to sexual mistreatment, grooming, harassment, abuse, assault, exploitation, and human trafficking that are designed to protect young people.* Further, while the grade 6 and 8 indicators do not explicitly reference "human and sex trafficking," terms such as sexual mistreatment, grooming, harassment, abuse, assault, exploitation, and boundary violations *were intentionally chosen to provide age-appropriate instruction on these issues.*

Some local school districts have incorporated the topics mentioned above in curricula at all three levels and have included human trafficking specifically in middle school curriculum for several years. Rather than imposing mandates on the teaching of human and sex trafficking awareness, local superintendents support program guidance from the MSDE.

Again, while we appreciate the bill's good intention, we ask the Committee to continue to honor the well-established and balanced relationship between the state and local education experts on the creation of standards, and implementation of local curriculum.

For these reasons, PSSAM **opposes** House Bill 763 and kindly requests an **unfavorable** report.