



FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

House Bill 161

Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework - Established

Hearing March 20, 2025

I encourage a **Favorable with Amendments** report on HB161 for the following reasons.

This bill provides for a comprehensive school education framework that local jurisdictions will develop. Maryland students can benefit from greater knowledge and understanding of a range of health topics, and the bill names a minimum list of topics that the framework must include. In addition to specific health knowledge, however, students can benefit from a comprehensive set of health literacy skills that provide lifelong abilities to find, understand and use health information and services.

Therefore, the list in HB161 is missing a required element of K-12 school health specified in HB1082 Maryland Consumer Health Information Hub that became law in 2022. In HB1082, the Hub as implemented by the University of Maryland School of Public Health Horowitz Center for Health Literacy is supposed to provide “**educational and age-appropriate resources that teach students health literacy and health literacy skills for primary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education**” [HB1082, 20-2205,(B)(2)]. It would be redundant and counterproductive for the Hub to develop health literacy resources and counties to develop their health topic framework separately and in parallel.

I suggest the following amendment to align HB161 with HB1082.

1. Add text referencing health literacy at 7-401(c)(4)(I).
 - a. Rewrite “Each county board shall create an age-appropriate curriculum that is consistent with the comprehensive health education framework” to “Each county board shall create an age-appropriate curriculum that is consistent with the comprehensive health education framework *and health literacy skill-building*.”

I believe this minor edit will align two very important health education initiatives that can help students and their families be informed about and manage their health.

Cynthia Baur *Cynthia Baur*
Director, Horowitz Center for Health Literacy