

INFORMATIONAL

Senate Bill 254

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

**Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
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The Maryland State Education Association offers this informational testimony on Senate Bill 254, which would require that health curricula on the awareness and prevention of sexual abuse and assault include, for students in grades 6 through 8, material promoting the awareness and prevention of human and sex trafficking.

MSEA represents 76,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 44 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

MSEA tenaciously advocates for the policies and programs that will give our students access to the resources they need to achieve their full potential. We understand clearly that the health and safety of our students has a direct impact on their academic and non-academic outcomes. However, MSEA has a longstanding concern about legislatively mandating curriculum. We believe that it is the purview of the MSDE and the State Board of Education to develop and implement curriculum standards to meet the academic needs of the students served in Maryland's public schools. It is then the responsibility of local districts to determine how best to implement a program of study that best serves the needs of their students.

We appreciate the intent of this legislation and the importance of the subject matter proposed. However, adding content to the health curriculum raises concern about the amount of content already required to be covered, especially given that the course is only a ½ credit course, and how new subjects could best be incorporated. We believe that local boards and educators— particularly those who are health educators, mental and behavioral health educators, and health practitioners embedded within our schools— are best suited to address this issue and to determine how best to include it into their current required course content.