



HB0073 – PUBLIC SCHOOLS – WATER SAFETY AND SWIMMING COURSE - ESTABLISHED

February 25, 2026

WAYS AND MEANS

OPPOSE

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) opposes **HB0073 - Public Schools - Water Safety and Swimming Course - Established**. This bill requires that on or before July 1, 2027, the State Board of Education develop curriculum content standards for a course on water safety and swimming for public school students in kindergarten through grade 8. Beginning in the 2027-2028 school year, each county board is required to implement a course on water safety and swimming that aligns with the state curriculum standards for students in kindergarten through grade 8. County boards may award an elective physical education credit to students for successful completion of the course. Each county board must also ensure the provision of reasonable accommodations necessary to provide students with disabilities equal opportunity to participate, to the fullest extent possible, in the water safety and swimming course. Additionally, public schools are authorized to partner with a local parks and recreation agency to provide access to the necessary water and swimming facilities for the water safety and swimming course required by the bill. Finally, the State Board is authorized, but not required, to adopt regulations to carry out the provisions of the bill.

AACPS recognizes the need for and importance of water safety instruction. AACPS has implemented a comprehensive water safety program. All fifth grade students in the district participate in the Water Ready Program, consisting of both classroom instruction and pool instruction. However, AACPS opposes efforts by the General Assembly to legislate local public school curriculum or assessments. The authority to establish curriculum and assessments is the domain of the State Board of Education and the local boards of education, the same entities charged with researching, investigating, and evaluating both curriculum and assessments. Maintaining this authority with the State and local boards allows for collaboration between local boards of education, the State, and stakeholders to ensure that all students, schools, and school systems are held accountable.

The Maryland General Assembly frequently considers legislation to mandate public school curriculum. Attempts to legislate curriculum only weaken the effectiveness of the entire educational program contrary to the interest of our students and the obligations of school systems. The State Board has established State standards and graduation requirements, and local boards implements locally developed curriculum and high quality instructional materials to ensure that State standards are met and students are prepared to meet graduation requirements. In this way, the State, local boards of education, and educators collaborate to ensure that all students, schools, and school systems are held accountable for their work.

HB0073 requires AACPS to dramatically expand the scope of our water safety program, without providing funding to support this expansion or accounting for the lack of pool access by public schools. AACPS estimates the cost to implement HB0073 to be \$24.4 million. Moreover, Anne Arundel County has only two public, county-operated pools. Operation of the existing fifth-grade program relies on these pools nearly every school day. No additional capacity exists to support the expansion required under this bill.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on HB0073.