

INFORMATIONAL
House Bill 73
Public Schools - Water Safety and Swimming Course - Established

House Ways & Means Committee
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The Maryland State Education Association offers this informational testimony on HB 73, which would require the State Board of Education to develop curriculum content for an elective course in water safety and swimming for public school students in kindergarten through grade 8. It would also require, beginning in the 2027-2028 school year, county boards of education to implement the water safety and swimming curriculum content for students in kindergarten through grade 8 in public schools.

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 advocates for the policies and programs that will give our students access to the resources and knowledge they need to achieve their full potential, and we recognize the value of ensuring that students are informed on how to stay safe in and around water. Simultaneously, we have longstanding concerns about legislatively mandating curriculum. With finite instructional time in the school year, adding content without a comprehensive review of existing standards risks reducing the time available for each topic. 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 sincerely appreciate the intent of this legislation and the goal of ensuring that all students have access to water safety instruction, and we support efforts to increase community access to swimming facilities. We believe that the State Board and local boards are best suited to determine how to best incorporate this issue.