

BILL: House Bill 142
TITLE: Education - Health and Safety - Emotional Health Awareness Programs
POSITION: OPPOSE
DATE: February 11, 2016
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means Committee
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 142, which would specifically require each local school system to implement a program to provide awareness of the five signs of emotional suffering to students, parents and guardians, school personnel, and coaches.

MABE appreciates the need for school systems to provide programs and services that enhance student health and safety. Professional development for educators, including coaches, is a vitally important component of implementing any program successfully. Today, local school systems are engaged in a wide variety of locally selected programs to ensure that all schools, classrooms, and interactions with educators are consistent with creating a safe and healthy school environment conducive to teaching and learning.

The health and safety of the more than 860,000 students attending public schools is extremely important to local boards of education, including the safety of students in the context of behavioral health. And MABE and all local boards know the importance of providing high quality professional development and training for staff regarding behavioral health issues. This is an emerging area of great concern and intensive scrutiny for local boards of education and school administrators in terms of identifying best practices, successful programs, and resources to support those programs.

MABE believes that in creating the State Board and local boards of education the General Assembly has appropriately delegated the responsibility for the development of curriculum and student instructional programming, as well as professional development programming for teachers and other school employees. Therefore, MABE respectfully requests that decisions to adopt and implement the types of programs suggested by this legislation continue to be matters for local boards of education and the professional judgment of administrators and educators in each local school system.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 142.