

BILL: House Bill 528
TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education – Sensible Sugar in Schools Act
DATE: February 18, 2016
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means Committee
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's local boards of education, opposes House Bill 528.

Local boards of education recognize the importance of developing healthy school environments, which includes providing high quality health and physical education programs as well as meeting the nutritional needs of students through school breakfasts, lunches, afterschool meals, and vending machine policies. MABE opposes this legislation because it would require each local board of education to form a separate workgroup and develop new policies for reducing students' total sugar intake per school meal.

MABE does not believe this bill is necessary, because federal law and local policies and programs are already designed to ensure that all foods and beverages sold to students on the public school campus meet increasingly stringent nutritional standards. Local school system policies stress the importance to students of physical activity in maintaining good health and that improve the nutritional quality of foods and beverages provided in the public school setting. Local boards of education, superintendents, and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), work collaboratively to achieve these goals.

Federal and state standards for student health and fitness, especially regarding nutrition, continue to be reformed and enhanced to address the national epidemics of juvenile diabetes and obesity. At the same time, child hunger and inequitable access to healthy meals impacts far too many students as an obstacle to learning. The federal government is also engaged in promoting improvements in expanding access to high quality school meal programs.

The 2010 Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization, entitled the "The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act," mandated major reforms in school meal programs to improve the nutritional value of the meals served to Maryland students each day. In response to federal reforms, and local needs, school systems are increasingly involved in summer and weekend meal programs; and partnerships to help ensure daily access to healthy food for all students. This 2010 law reauthorized six major nutrition programs, including school breakfast and lunch. Since 2010, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has promulgated or proposed numerous regulations and policies to implement the law. Today, another 5-year reauthorization bill is being considered, the Improving Child Nutrition, Integrity and Access Act of 2016. In this context, Maryland's local school systems and food service programs respectfully request that no new state requirements be enacted at this time.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 528.