

**BILL:** House Bill 1139  
**TITLE:** Education – Maryland Community School Strategy for Excellence in Public Education Act  
**DATE:** March 10, 2016  
**COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means Committee  
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports the intent of House Bill 1139 to facilitate a local school system's decision to adopt and implement the policies and programs consistent with the community schools approach to meeting the needs of students, families, and communities.

House Bill 1139 defines a community school as an “evidence–based strategy encompassing an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement in order to improve student learning, positive school climate, strong ties to family, and community partnerships.” MABE believes that the parents and children in Maryland are best served through a coordinated effort by all those charged with the care of school age children in the state; and that local boards of education facilities are utilized for many community activities serving as focal points in the lives of school age children in Maryland.

Similarly, MABE recommends that boards of education work collaboratively with state and local agencies and private providers to promote high quality, affordable before and after school programs and other services. In these ways, MABE's positions are quite consistent with the goals and objectives of the community schools strategies included in this legislation. As the bill states, “The purpose of a community school is to help students and families overcome barriers that prevent children from learning and succeeding in life by having an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and parental and community engagement.” MABE also appreciates the bill's recognition of local board governance in adopting such strategies and entering into such partnerships. MABE firmly believes that local boards play a vital role in governing the local school system, advocating for public education, and engaging local communities and promoting participation by parents and other community members so that everyone feels a responsibility for, and ownership of, Maryland's public schools and our students' futures.

MABE certainly recognizes the considerable costs associated with achieving the scope of high quality services envisioned in this legislation. In this light, MABE endorses the bill's recommendation for further consideration of the community schools model as the General Assembly and local school systems strive to identify ways in which resources can be integrated and optimized to serve Maryland's students and families.