

BILL: House Bill 1204
TITLE: Education – PARCC Testing – Exemption for Children with Disabilities
(Ben’s Rule)
POSITION: OPPOSE
DATE: March 10, 2016
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state’s twenty-four local boards of education, opposes House Bill 1204.

MABE opposes House Bill 1204 because it would inappropriately exempt a student with a disability from taking a Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment or its equivalent. Federal laws and regulations require all students to be assessed, including those with disabilities. The most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, continues to mandate the annual assessment requirements established by its precursor, the No Child Left Behind Act.

The current federal law requires annual assessments of all students in grades 3 through 8 and at least once in high school in reading/language arts and mathematics; the law also requires students to be tested in science at least once in grades 3 through 5, 6 through 8, and 9 through 12.

Historically, MABE has played a leading role in advocating for a high quality academic performance accountability system in Maryland. Our students deserve nothing less. Therefore, MABE is actively participating in the work of the Commission to Review Maryland’s Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools to develop recommendations regarding “how local school systems and the State can improve the process in which local, State, and federally mandated assessments are administered and used to inform instruction” (House Bill 452, 2015).

As this committee knows, MABE supports local decision-making authority in developing curriculum and assessments, in conjunction with the State Board of Education, as these entities are charged with the responsibility to research, investigate, and evaluate curriculum and assessments, and are ultimately accountable for student performance. At the same time, compliance with federal laws is paramount, and this bill is not consistent with doing so.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 781.