

BILL: House Bill 580
TITLE: Labor and Employment - Maryland Healthy Working Families Act
DATE: March 1, 2016
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Economic Matters Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the State's local boards of education, opposes House Bill 580.

House Bill 580 proposes to require employers, including local school systems, to adopt a "sick and safe leave policy" under which an employee would earn at least 1 hour of paid sick and safe leave, at the same rate as the employee normally earns, for every 30 hours an employee works. Specifically, local school systems are opposed to the scope of the legislation applying to employees who regularly work 8 or more hours per week. Under this provision, school systems would be required to provide the proposed paid sick and safe leave to part-time employees regardless of the terms of any existing employment policy or collective bargaining agreement.

MABE believes that the women and men who work for the public school system are the key to educating our young people. Local boards of education and superintendents work to ensure that the salaries, benefits, and working conditions are conducive to recruiting and retaining the most highly qualified and effective teachers and staff possible.

At the same time, school systems are consistently encouraged to operate more like businesses; focusing on cost savings and efficiencies in operations. MABE can assure the General Assembly that school systems have, are, and will continue to do so. Today, many school systems are confronting either declining enrollment and shrinking resources to meet essential fixed costs; or are experiencing continued growth and coping with overly crowded school facilities and unmet staffing needs. And yet the mandates proposes in this legislation would divert scarce resources to enhance benefits for employees who are already compensated in accordance with employment policies concerning their agreement to serve as substitute teachers, coaches, or in other part-time capacities.

In Maryland, the terms of employment for the vast majority of school system employees is governed by an agreement negotiated and agreed to by the school system and the employee organization, or union, representing the employee. House Bill 580 would impact all of these negotiated agreements by introducing a newly mandated benefit to qualifying employees; resulting in renegotiations and the adoption of new employment policies and practices.

In this light, MABE opposes this bill based on the potential costs to local school systems and the potential disruption to the orderly administration of the more than 1400 public schools in Maryland.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 580.