

BILL: House Bill 708
TITLE: Education - Maryland Seal of Biliteracy Act - Establishment
POSITION: SUPPORT
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, supports House Bill 708.

This bill would establish the Maryland Seal of Biliteracy Program to recognize public high school graduates who have attained proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing one or more languages in addition to English. MABE appreciates that this legislation provides local board discretion to participate in a new state program with potential benefits to students who earn a Seal of Biliteracy.

MABE believes that establishing the Seal of Biliteracy program within the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is consistent with other ongoing initiatives to better prepare Maryland's students for success in college and career. Maryland's State Board of Education has established statewide standards and statewide graduation requirements; and each of the twenty-four local boards has further adopted and implemented locally-developed curriculum and graduation requirements. The appropriate role of state education programs is to lay the foundation for holding all school systems accountable to the pursuit of high standards, while providing local discretion to identify priorities and allocate resources toward the goal of reaching those standards.

Maryland has a national reputation for its rigorous state standards, and a school finance system that equitably allocates state education aid among the twenty-four local jurisdictions. As Maryland continues to implement the standards and assessments relating to College and Career Readiness, MABE looks forward to the General Assembly's support for sustaining the State Board and local board of education partnership that has served Maryland and our students so well. MABE believes that Senate Bill 781 is consistent with this approach, by ensuring that the local board decision-making role is fully recognized.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 708.