

BILL: House Bill 725
TITLE: Handguns - School Employees - Handgun Permits and Carrying Weapons on School Property
DATE: March 15, 2016
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Judiciary Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all twenty-four local boards of education, opposes House Bill 725.

MABE recognizes and appreciates the intent of this legislation to facilitate the enhancement of school safety. However, MABE believes that the current law provides ample authority for individuals employed for purposes of providing armed public safety in schools to do so. Section 4-102 of the Criminal Law Article, which generally prohibits any person from possessing a firearm on school property, already appropriately exempts (1) a law enforcement officer in the regular course of the officer's duty, and (2) a person hired by a county board of education specifically for the purpose of guarding public school property. The law also exempts school sponsored "shooting activities" and the demonstration of weapons for educational purposes.

MABE firmly believes that safety in public schools is the joint responsibility of local boards of education, school administrators and staff, students, parents and guardians, law enforcement and other public safety agencies, human services agencies, and the community in general. Therefore, we will continue to urge federal, state, and local governments to ensure adequate and equitable funding for local public school safety programs, alternative education programs, and the wide array of mental health and public safety services provided by other public and private entities, which are essential to maintaining safe schools and access to a quality education for all of Maryland's students.

Maryland's local boards greatly appreciate the state's investments in school safety, including the \$25 million provided in recent years for school facility security enhancements, and the establishment of the Maryland Center for School Safety. MABE strongly supports these types of school safety programs and investments; initiatives which do not require amending the laws pertaining to carrying weapons on school property.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 725.