

BILL: Senate Bill 1041
TITLE: Education - Digital Equity for All Act
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
DATE: March 16, 2016
COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports the intent of Senate Bill 1041 to address the educational technology needs of Maryland's public schools.

MABE appreciates that this legislation would require the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop and adopt infrastructure standards that support the use of digital devices on a ratio of one device to one student, but opposes the provision and would mandate local school systems meet that standard by 2019.

Local boards of education certainly appreciate the attention and funding that this legislation directs to school system infrastructure needs. MABE recognizes that the ongoing transition to a greater reliance on educational technology has highlighted the need for state and local resources to address system-wide upgrades in information technology infrastructure and instructional hardware and software. Local boards continue to believe that without a comprehensive needs assessment of the current state of infrastructure, it is difficult to determine the realistic costs of reaching a goal of supporting one portable digital device per student. Of course, MABE also strongly supports local board and school system administration discretion to adopt policies and pursue initiatives based on local priorities and the availability of financial resources.

Consistent with these concerns, MABE proposes that a comprehensive needs assessment of the areas in the legislation would identify specific educational technology infrastructure needs among Maryland school system and would allow the State to estimate the actual costs of reaching the legislation's intended goal.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 1041, with amendments (See reverse).

SB 1041 Amendment Offered by: MABE

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On pages 2-3, strike in their entirety the lines beginning with line 7 on page 2 through line 19 on page 3, inclusive.

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 2, after line 6, insert:

“(B) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 1, 2016, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL CONDUCT A COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDED TO SUPPORT THE INTEGRATION OF DIGITAL DEVICES INTO THE STATES’ EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR MARYLAND K-12 STUDENTS.

THE STUDY SHALL INCLUDE:

(1) A SURVEY OF CURRENT INTERNET INFRASTRUCTURE AND DIGITAL DEVICE AVAILABILITY IN MARYLAND SCHOOLS;

(2) A COST-ESTIMATE OF BRINGING ALL MARYLAND SCHOOLS UP TO THE LEVEL OF BEING ABLE TO SUPPORT ONE DEVICE PER STUDENT;

(3) ANY PROCUREMENT AVENUES THAT MAY PROVE USEFUL IN PROVIDING DIGITAL DEVICES AND RELATED EQUIPMENT TO STUDENTS ACROSS MULTIPLE SCHOOL DISTRICTS; AND

(4) A COST-ESTIMATE OF PROVIDING ONE DEVICE PER STUDENT IN ALL MARYLAND SCHOOLS.”