

**BILL:** Senate Bill 657  
**TITLE:** Task Force to Study the Impact of Cell Phone Use in Public Schools  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**DATE:** March 2, 2016  
**COMMITTEE:** Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes Senate Bill 657.

MABE does not believe there is ample justification to establish a Task Force to Study the Impact of Cell Phone Use in Public Schools. Under this bill, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) would be required to staff and coordinate a task force to: (1) study and analyze the impact of cell phone use in public schools; (2) assess the costs and benefits of student cell phone use in public schools; and (3) consider any other relevant matters.

Maryland local boards of education know that the ability to use technology is essential to student success in the 21st century. Boards recognize that advances in technology, including computerization, telecommunications, mobile technologies, and other resources, have the proven potential to significantly improve student performance through access to information and enriched educational experiences.

Student access to standards-aligned digital resources and virtual learning opportunities are being advanced through collaboration among local school systems and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), through initiatives such as the Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities Program (MVLO), and the Maryland Virtual School (MVS) Program. Maryland adopted its first state education technology plan in 1995, and continues to update the plan, to ensure that students and staff realize the optimum benefits from technology in the classroom. The state plan includes objectives to:

- Improve student learning through technology;
- Improve staff's knowledge and skills to integrate technology into instruction;
- Improve decision-making, productivity, and efficiency throughout the school system through the use of technology;
- Improve equitable access to appropriate technologies among all stakeholders; and
- Improve the instructional uses of technology through research and evaluation.

Today, nearly all of Maryland's classrooms have the capability to take advantage of the Internet and the state continues to make progress toward the goal of having 100 percent of classrooms connected to this technology as an appropriate educational resource. MABE is resolved to continue to support programs to: prepare students for college and career readiness through access to online learning, educational technologies, and high-quality digital content; create a fully technology-proficient PreK-12 educator workforce; and provide equitable access to current and emerging technologies for all students and educators and expanded opportunities for parents, families and the community.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 657.