

BILL: House Bill 75
TITLE: Education – Graduation Requirements – Fine Arts
DATE: February 2, 2017
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 75, which would allow the Fine Arts credit requirement for receiving the Maryland high school diploma to be satisfied by completing one credit in computer science, multimedia, or computer programming.

In general, MABE advocates that any changes to requirements regarding curriculum, student assessments, or graduation requirements, should be addressed through the State Board of Education's policy-making and regulatory process. MABE believes that in creating the State Board and local boards of education the General Assembly has appropriately delegated the responsibility for the development of curriculum and student instructional programming, as well as professional development programming for teachers and other school employees.

Specifically, MABE supports the comprehensive framework of Fine Arts education, and graduation requirement, contained in the State's regulations. The instructional program requirements for grades K - 12 contain specific competencies and objectives pertaining to the Fine Arts, including art, dance, music, and theater. State regulations emphasize that the Fine Arts comprehensive instructional program shall provide for the diversity of student needs, abilities, and interests, at the early, middle, and high school learning years, and shall include all of the following goals:

- To develop the ability to perceive and respond to experiences and the environment through the fine art;
- To develop an understanding of the fine arts in historical, cultural, and social contexts;
- To develop skills and attitudes and to organize knowledge and ideas for creative expression and performance in the fine arts; and
- To develop the ability to apply criteria to aesthetic decision making.

Again, the State Board has established these State standards for Fine Arts instruction; and local boards implement locally-developed curriculum to ensure that the state standards are met and students are prepared in the Fine Arts. In this way, state and local boards and educators collaborate to ensure that all students, schools, and school systems are held accountable for their work in this important area of student learning.

While the General Assembly has enacted significant education related legislation and funding initiatives, it has consistently delegated the regular oversight of public education to the State Board and local boards of education established specifically to make educational policy decisions. MABE believes that House Bill 75 deals with precisely the type and specificity of education policy issue that should be reserved to the State Board, in conjunction with local school systems.

For these reasons, MABE urges this Committee to issue an unfavorable report on House Bill 75.