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BILL: House Bill 1082
TITLE: Heroin and Opioid Education and Community Action Act of 2017
(Start Talking Maryland Act)
DATE: March 7, 2017
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports House Bill 1082, and the intent to meaningfully engage local school systems in statewide efforts to confront the heroin and opioid addiction public health crisis.

MABE supports the proposal to update and enhance the currently mandated drug education program to specifically include a stand-alone unit on heroin and opioid addiction and prevention in each of three grade bands. In addition, MABE has identified several amendments local school boards are requesting in the sections of the bill pertaining to school health services and the role of community action officials.

MABE appreciates the proposal that public policy address the training and provisioning of school nurses with Naloxone to respond to overdoses on school premises. However, MABE is requesting several amendments to this section of the bill. This legislation would require each local board of education to adopt a policy authorizing school nurses to administer naloxone or another overdose-reversing medication to a student who is determined to be suffering from a narcotic overdose. This policy is more appropriately the subject of school health guidelines which, once approved by the Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) are carried out on a statewide basis through the offices of school health coordinators already empowered under existing statutory authority to do so. Importantly, this approach helps to ensure that all school nurses and school health personnel are governed by the same standards, regardless of whether they are employees of county health departments, local school systems, or other entities. Similarly, it would not be appropriate for school board policy to include provisions such as training for school nurses, medication administration procedures; or emergency procedures.

This bill would require that local board policies include a provision requiring all public schools to obtain and store naloxone or other overdose-reversing medication. In this regard, MABE appreciates the intent to ensure that school health suites are equipped and school health personnel are prepared to respond to overdoses in schools and the support of these initiatives with state grant funding. MABE requests that references to school nurses also include school health personnel to reflect the fact that in many cases the school health staff person is not a registered nurse, but may be a certified medical technician or other qualified personnel providing services under a licensed nurse's supervision.

Lastly, MABE requests amendments to the section of the bill proposing to require local school systems to hire community action officials to clarify and distinguish the public health responsibilities more aligned with county health departments, and the facilitation of school forums for student and parent outreach and education.

Again, local boards greatly appreciate the proposed state investment in supporting the costs of school health personnel training and the purchase of Naloxone to ensure comprehensive statewide preparedness and responsiveness to incidents in schools. Ongoing annual funding to support these programs and services would be essential to their success. For these reasons, MABE supports House Bill 1082 and requests a favorable report with the amendments described above, and on the reverse page. MABE pledges to work toward passage of this bill with amendments to support its successful implementation.

Maryland Association of Boards of Education

Requested Amendments to House Bill 1082

Amendments

On page 4, in line 20, after POLICY insert "IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCHOOL HEALTH GUIDELINES AND STATE LAWS AND REGULATIONS.".

On page 4 in line 22 after "NURSE" insert ", SCHOOL HEALTH PERSONNEL, OR OTHER STAFF DETERMINED TO BE APPROPRIATE.".

On page 4 in line 24 after "STUDENT" insert "OR OTHER PERSON ON SCHOOL PREMISES".

On page 4 in line 24 replace "DETERMINED" with "SUSPECTED" and replace "NARCOTIC" with "OPIOID, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCHOOL HEALTH GUIDELINES".

Strike beginning with line 27 on page 4 through line 3 on page 5.

Strike beginning with line 16 on page 5 through line 27, and replace with:

THE COUNTY BOARD, IN COOPERATION WITH THE LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS, SHALL COORDINATE SCHOOL-BASED COMMUNITY FORUMS; AND THE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT, IN COOPERATION WITH THE COUNTY BOARD, SHALL CONDUCT COUNTY-WIDE PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORTS.

On page 6, strike beginning with "AT" in line 12 through "EVENT" in line 13.