



621 Ridgely Avenue, Suite 300, Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-5414 · 800-841-8197 · Fax: 410-841-6580

**BILL:** Senate Bill 618  
**TITLE:** Education - Achievement School District - Establishment  
**DATE:** March 8, 2017  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**COMMITTEE:** Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes Senate Bill 618, which would establish a separate governing authority for certain public schools within the State of Maryland, and within multiple local school systems. MABE believes this legislation runs counter to the intent of the recently enacted Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to respect local board decision-making in approving school-wide or group-specific intervention strategies to improve student and school performance.

Local boards of education are striving to secure resources and implement solutions to turning around struggling public schools. However, MABE opposes State mandated interventions which transfer governance authority and/or funding away from local boards and toward private schools, charter school operators, or other entities. MABE believes the principle of local governance by boards of education is fundamental to a sound system of public education; and that a sound system of public education is fundamental to sustaining the well-educated citizenry essential to a flourishing democracy. By retaining decision-making authority at the local level, local boards of education can best balance educational practices, available resources to implement those practices, public input, and academic and financial accountability.

Maryland statute provides that “educational matters that affect the counties shall be under the control of a county board of education” and that local boards “determine, with the advice of the county superintendent, the educational policies of the county school system.” Local boards of education exercise this governance authority in compliance with state and federal laws and in conjunction with the State Board of Education, which adopts statewide regulations and policies in accordance with state and federal statutory authority.

Each local board plays a vital role in governing the local school system and engaging local communities and promoting participation by parents and other community members in the education process. Local boards are the primary advocates for local, state and federal funding to support the teaching and learning of students and efficient and effective school system administration. Through MABE’s board development program and other professional development activities, each board is striving to continuously improve its ability to govern in a manner that best meets the needs of all students in the local school system.

Local governance authority of boards of education in Maryland and throughout the nation is often challenged by state, federal and private sector initiatives. In Maryland, when state initiatives impose new requirements on local school systems, the legislature and State Board have typically engaged in collaborative development and implementation of new programs and services. MABE appreciates the strong historical record of the General Assembly and State Board’s recognition and support for the governance role of local boards.

MABE is supporting legislation pending in the 2017 session to prohibit the State Department and Board of Education from adopting and imposing on a local school system intervention strategies which include: creating a state–run school district; converting a public school to a charter school; issuing scholarships to public school students to attend nonpublic schools through direct vouchers, tax credit programs, or education savings accounts; and contracting with a for–profit company. In addition, MABE has requested amendments to add: creating a local education agency in addition to those established as of January 1, 2017; and creating a public school without local board approval. In these ways, MABE is working to ensure the continued primary role of local boards of education in governing local public school systems in Maryland. And for these reasons, MABE urges an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 618.