

BILL: House Bill 920
TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education - School Personnel - Training Requirement
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
DATE: March 29, 2017
COMMITTEE: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports House Bill 920, with the amendments described below.

This bill would require the State Board of Education to require all school personnel, educators, administrators and all other school-based staff, to complete training each year in the skills required to understand and respond to youth suicide risk and identify resources to help students in crisis.

MABE appreciates the need for school systems to provide programs and services that enhance student health and safety. Professional development is a vitally important component of implementing any program successfully. Today, local school systems are engaged in a wide variety of locally selected programs to ensure that all schools, classrooms, and interactions with educators are consistent with creating a safe and healthy school environment conducive to teaching and learning.

That said, this legislation proposes an unprecedented scope of mandated annual professional development to all school employees, certificated and noncertificated, who engage with students. Furthermore, the bill would go beyond subject matter training to training on appropriate responses. Therefore, MABE is respectfully requesting the adoption of the following amendments.

First, MABE requests that the scope of the bill be limited to apply to teachers and principals and other “certificated” employees. The bill’s proposed mandated training will be substantial enough regarding these employees to present an enormous unfunded professional development responsibility on local school systems. MABE therefore urges favorable consideration of an amendment to clarify that the training mandate not apply to all support staff who would also be required to receive training under House Bill 920. The requested amendment would insert “**certificated**” after “all” on page 2 in line 7.

Second, MABE urges favorable consideration of an amendment to clearly limit the scope of liability arising from the passage of this legislation. The amendment would, on page 2, after line 27, insert:

(D) No person shall have a cause of action for any loss or damage caused by any act or omission resulting from the implementation of the provisions of this section or resulting from any training, or lack of training, required by this section unless the loss or damage was caused by willful or wanton misconduct or gross negligence. The training, or lack of training, required by the provisions of this section shall not be construed to impose any specific duty of care.

MABE firmly believes that with these amendments House Bill 920 would meaningfully enhance the awareness and preparedness of teachers and principals to appropriately respond to students in crisis and situations presenting a potential risk of suicide. For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 920, with the amendments described above.