

## SCHOOL SAFETY & SECURITY

### MABE POSITIONS

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education, representing all local boards of education in Maryland:

- ✓ **Supports** federal, State, and local government funding for local public school safety programs, facility upgrades, and the wide array of behavioral health and public safety services provided by other public and private entities, which are essential to maintaining safe and secure schools and access to an excellent education for all of Maryland's students.
- ✓ **Supports** increased state and local funding for programs addressing gangs, drugs, human trafficking and the impact of systemic violence in communities, schools, and our students' lives.
- ✓ **Supports** local discretion to adopt programs and policies to maintain and improve school safety and security.
- ✗ **Opposes** legislation which attempts to address student safety concerns by prescribing specific tools or approaches, or imposes unfunded mandates on local boards of education.

### BACKGROUND

Safety and security in public schools is extremely important to local boards of education for the protection of students and staff, as well as necessary to environments conducive to teaching and learning. MABE believes that safety in public schools is the joint responsibility of local boards of education, school administrators and staff, students, parents and guardians, law enforcement and other public safety agencies, human services agencies, and the community in general. Threats to school safety may be caused by factors within and outside the school. School safety issues arise in the daily operation of school facilities and services such as school buses, science labs, kitchens, and boiler rooms; in the daily administration of student discipline; and in developing and practicing emergency plans to respond to acts of violence and natural disasters.

School safety is defined in regulations adopted by the State Board: "All students in Maryland's public schools, without exception and regardless of race, ethnicity, region, religion, gender, sexual orientation, language, socioeconomic status, age, or disability, have the right to educational environments that are safe, appropriate for academic achievement, and free from any form of harassment."

Maryland mandated state and local bullying policies in 2008, and in 2016 required updates to address cyber bullying. Passed in 2010, the Safe Schools Act led to improvements in school system policies to address criminal gang activity, but additional resources are needed to address this and other threats to student and school safety. School employees, volunteers, and contractors are subject to state and local background check requirements and mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse. In 2014, legislation supported by MABE passed to expand the "person in position of authority" law that criminalizes, as a fourth degree sex offense, sexual activity between educators and students. In 2015, legislation passed to require contractors and subcontractors to conduct background checks to prevent an employee being assigned to work on school premises if the employee has been convicted of specific crimes.

In response to the tragic events of September 11, 2001, education and public safety officials jointly reviewed school safety policies. In 2004, the State Board adopted regulations requiring local school systems to adopt emergency plans and conduct drills to prepare for violent or traumatic events on school grounds. Following the tragic school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012, the State Board approved reforms to require evacuation, shelter in place, lockdown and other drills that all schools must conduct each year. In 2013, the State budget included \$25 million to fund facility risk assessments, security cameras, photo identification systems, door lock upgrades, and renovating school entrances. In 2013, with MABE's support, the Maryland Center for School Safety was created to facilitate coordination and collaboration between local school systems.

For additional information, see [MABE's Resolution on Safety in Public Schools](#).