

BILL: House Bill 910
TITLE: Education – Students with Reading Difficulties – Screenings and Interventions
DATE: February 22, 2018
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's local boards of education, opposes House Bill 910.

MABE appreciates this bill's intent to facilitate the screening, identification, and provision of instructional responses for students learning to read. However, MABE opposes this bill because it does not provide an appropriate balance of state accountability and local discretion to achieve state goals for student learning through locally developed reading instruction programs and strategies.

Specifically, MABE opposes the bill's requirements arising from the results of reading screenings. These include the use of an informal diagnostic assessment, structured literacy instruction, and notice to parents of not only the screening results but also the structured literacy reading instruction intervention that will be provided in response. The bill would also dictate the type of reading intervention used, by requiring a series of specific instructional strategies.

In addition, this bill would mandate very specific durations of reading interventions, referring to "at least 6 weeks but not more than 8 weeks." MABE is very concerned with legislating this degree of detail regarding instructional programming. MABE also objects to the costly mandates to develop system wide parent literacy surveys and comply with other data collection and reporting requirements.

Generally, MABE opposes efforts by the General Assembly to legislate curriculum, courses of instruction, assessments, or graduation requirements, firmly believing that this role belongs to local boards of education in conjunction with the State Board of Education. Exceptions to this rule are rare. In creating the State Board and local boards of education, the General Assembly has delegated to them the responsibility for guiding and delivering a high quality statewide system of public education through state standards and accountability measures, and locally governed and administered curriculum, teaching, and learning.

Again, MABE opposes the overall approach of this legislation to set forth in statute the method of assessment and instructional interventions for students learning to read.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 910.