

**BILL:** Senate Bill 164  
**TITLE:** Education - Student Use of Backpacks - Assessment and Reduction of Health Effects  
**DATE:** January 24, 2018  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**COMMITTEE:** Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs 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 Senate Bill 164.

MABE appreciates the intent of this legislation to promote heightened awareness among school personnel, parents and students concerning issues related to the weight of student backpacks. Local boards of education place a very high priority on student health, by ensuring that schools are operating in accordance with adopted state school health guidelines and local policies and procedures intended to provide a health and safe school environment conducive to student learning.

However, MABE opposes this bill as an inappropriate legislative intrusion on the responsibility and authority of the local school system to develop and implement policies regarding the array of issues raised by this bill, including the use of student backpacks and alternatives such as electronic devices. There have been frequent attempts by the General Assembly in recent years to mandate public school health policy and procedures. MABE generally opposes these efforts in light of the local and state board of education role and responsibility to develop school system policy. That said, when priority issues such the heroin/opioid epidemic or reforms to state policy regarding students with diabetes do arise, MABE has participated in developing legislation to facilitate the school system roles in advancing state policy goals.

Again, MABE supports collaboration between legislators and school systems regarding proposed policy changes on behalf of students, and yet MABE strongly believes that specific policy changes must be deliberated, decided, and implemented by local boards of education and school administrators.

For these reasons, MABE requests that the committee issue an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 164.