

BILL: Senate Bill 638
TITLE: Teachers and Teacher Preparation Programs - Research-Based Reading Instruction
POSITION: OPPOSE
DATE: February 28, 2018
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 twenty-four local boards of education, opposes Senate Bill 638.

MABE opposes this bill's proposal to mandate action by the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board (PSTEB) to require candidates applying for a certificate to teach in elementary through 6th grade, or teach students with disabilities, to pass an examination on research-based reading instruction as defined in this bill.

Local boards of education support investments and enhancements in programs to ensure that teachers are highly qualified and highly effective in the classroom. Being highly effective in today's classrooms requires teachers to be adept at an array of teaching techniques and differentiated instruction to address diverse student learning styles. In this context, MABE appreciates the intent of this bill to promote one approach to defining high quality reading instruction.

MABE recognizes the imperative that state certification requirements are consistent with the goal of preparing teachers for the breadth and depth of instructional challenges and learning opportunities presented by each unique child. However, MABE opposes legislative proposals regarding the development and administration of teacher certification and professional development standards. Instead, local boards support the development and implementation of specific teacher education and certification requirements through the collaboration of MSDE, PSTEB, and higher education.

In 1991, the Maryland General Assembly enacted legislation that created PSTEB as a semi-autonomous board composed of 25 members. This board shares, with the State Board of Education, the authority to develop rules and regulations for the certification of teachers and other professional personnel and requirements for the preparation of teachers and other education personnel.

By contrast, this bill is in MABE's view overly prescriptive and would inappropriately intrude on the delegated function of PSTEB and the State Board of Education. MABE believes the scope and specificity of these requirements are more appropriately in the purview of these bodies, in conjunction with local school system hiring policies.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 638.