

UNFUNDED MANDATES

MABE POSITIONS

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

- ✗ **Opposes** legislation and state regulations which would impose any new unfunded or underfunded mandate on local school systems.
- ✓ **Supports** providing, or restoring, funding to support currently mandated programs and services.
- ✓ **Supports** repealing mandated programs and services which are not adequately funded.

BACKGROUND

Each year the General Assembly considers legislation to mandate that local school systems adopt new programs, procedures, or reporting requirements. Such proposals are generally referred to as “unfunded mandates” to reflect the fact that any new costs arising from the legislation would be borne with existing resources.

While MABE believes that education policy should be primarily in the purview of local boards in conjunction with the State Board, we recognize the General Assembly has an appropriate and essential role in enacting legislation on education funding and policy. Therefore, MABE consistently advocates that to the extent possible such legislation be discretionary, or authorizing, rather than mandatory. Similarly, MABE requests the State Board to consider the local board governance role and fiscal impacts on local school systems when exercising its authority to adopt education policies and regulations.

Maryland’s 24 local boards of education are entirely fiscally dependent on local, state, and federal funding. Unlike almost all of the other local boards across the country, Maryland’s boards are not authorized to collect taxes, instead relying on formula and grant allocations. While MABE does not advocate for such taxing authority, legislation or regulations imposing new costs for local school systems do pose a distinct challenge to Maryland’s local boards.

Maryland’s Constitution places a high priority on public education by requiring the General Assembly to “establish a thorough and efficient system of free public schools” and to “provide by taxation or otherwise for their maintenance.” State funding is provided through formulas and grants in the annual State operating budget; and local funding is provided in accordance with the “maintenance of effort” requirement that the local government provide at least as much per pupil funding as in the previous year. In general, neither state funding nor local funding are increased to reflect the increased costs to local school systems of complying with new legislative mandates.

Examples of unfunded mandates include: lead testing and remediation of school drinking water (2017); adopting the goal of 45% of high school graduates having career technology education (CTE) certification by 2025 (2017); providing parental consent in special education decisions (2017); restricting the suspension of elementary students through second grade and requiring in-school restorative practices (2017); mandating annual reviews with teacher unions of student assessment policies (2017); requiring translations of special education individualized education programs (IEPs) into native languages (2016); expanding prevailing wage rate rules to increase labor costs (2014); requiring CPR & defibrillator instruction (2015); and mandating college and career readiness high school assessments, remediation classes, and dual enrollment requirements (2014).

In 2012, the legislature permanently shifted hundreds of millions of dollars in teacher retirement costs to local governments and boards of education. Today, the local cost is rolled into maintenance of effort, with no additional local or state funding mandated to meet rising retirement costs. The shift continues to negatively affect local capacity to invest in public schools and Maryland’s ability to meet the educational needs of all students.

For additional information, see [MABE’s Resolution on Adequate and Equitable Education Funding](#).