

BILL: House Bill 1223
TITLE: Workgroup on Establishing an Independent School Board for the Juvenile Services Education System
DATE: February 21, 2019
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
COMMITTEE: Judiciary Committee
Ways and Means Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports House Bill 1223, which proposes to study the creation of an independent board to oversee the education programs in Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) facilities. MABE's only requested amendment would replace the reference to the "Governor" on page 3 in line 28 with the "General Assembly" to ensure that any recommendation to create a new board is clearly intended to be the subject of future legislation.

MABE recognizes the significant concerns regarding the quality and continuity of educational programs offered within DJS facilities and administered through the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Therefore MABE is supporting a concerted effort to explore alternative strategies to improve the quality of educational services to Maryland students placed in DJS facilities.

Local boards of education support a robust and successful approach to ensuring continuous access to high quality learning experiences for students placed in DJS facilities. Since the passage of the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act (BRFA) of 2013 local boards of education have been required to reimburse DJS for each child from the county that is placed in a detention facility for 15 or more consecutive days. The reimbursement amount is equivalent to the average amount of State and local funds spent for the public education of a nondisabled child in the county; and calculated for students who were included in a school system's annual enrollment count.

MABE and all local boards of education appreciate the need for continued state and local investment in the education of students enrolled in public school systems who, for a time, receive their education in DJS programs. MABE notes the challenge of crafting education programming for a relative small number of students who are in different situations in the criminal justice system and whose time within DJS is typically very brief. In this light, MABE supports studying alternative approaches to overseeing the delivery of education services to all youth in DJS facilities.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 1223, with the amendment described above.