

BILL: House Bill 439
TITLE: Public Schools - School Resource Officers - Prohibited Conduct
DATE: February 14, 2019
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 439, due to the lack of clarity and potential unintended consequences regarding the respective roles of teachers, school resource officers (SROs), and all other school personnel in maintaining a safe and disciplined school environment, and the role of school administrators in administering student discipline.

MABE recognizes the major contributions SROs are making in schools across the state to benefit school climate, culture and safety. Therefore, MABE respectfully disagrees with any proposal to unduly restrict the role of SROs. Today, SROs and teachers, principals, and other school personnel are collaborating to provide mentoring, counseling, and instruction concerning appropriate student behaviors, and are responding accordingly to violations of school policy and law.

The General Assembly is to be commended for the clear direction of the Safe to Learn Act of 2018 to develop a comprehensive curriculum for all SROs and any other designated school security personnel. The multi-faceted role of SRO's is evident in the outline of the 40-hour, 5-day, mandatory curriculum for all SROs and school security staff.

- School Resource Officer: Definition & History of Role
- Memorandum of Agreement/Understanding (MOU) between the police department and the school
- Working Collaboratively with School Administration and Staff
- Restorative Practices in Schools: PBIS, School Based Mediation, and School to Prison Pipeline considerations and Implicit Bias
- Maintaining a Positive School Climate
- Victimization of Youth in Schools - Child Protective Services
- Informal Counseling Roles and Responsibilities
- Disability & Diversity Awareness with a focus on Inclusiveness and Cultural Fluency
- Implicit Bias
- Drug Education and Current Trends in Maryland Schools
- Investigation of Bullying, Threats & Social Media
- Principles of Effective Learning - The Expanding Role of an SRO as an Instructor
- Constructive Interactions with Students - Building Trust and Reducing Fear
- Collaboration and Problem Solving with Stakeholders
- Youth Development, Behavior and Discipline

MABE firmly believes that safety in public schools is the joint responsibility of local boards of education, school administrators and staff, students, parents and guardians, law enforcement and other public safety agencies, human services agencies, and the community in general. Therefore, we continue to urge federal, state, and local governments to ensure adequate and equitable funding for local public school safety and security programs, alternative education programs, and the wide array of behavioral health and public safety services provided by other public and private entities. MABE believes that this holistic approach is essential to maintaining safe schools and access to a high quality education for all of Maryland's students.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 439. In the alternative, MABE requests amendments to clarify the integral role of SROs in responding appropriately to student behaviors, in accordance with the State SRO curriculum, including student behaviors resulting in disciplinary actions.