

BILL: House Bill 512
TITLE: Public School Construction - Maximum Gross Area Allowance for English Learner Students
DATE: February 19, 2019
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Appropriations Committee
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports House Bill 512, because it will improve the school facility standards for the classrooms in which students are receiving targeted instruction to gain English language proficiency.

House Bill 521 will help ensure that English Learners are able to receive instruction in educational settings tailored to optimize learning outcomes. This legislation would accomplish this goal by establishing parity between the square footage allocation of classroom space for English learner (EL) students and special education students.

For MABE and Maryland's 24 local school boards, the mission to provide all of Maryland's students with high performing school facilities conducive to learning is a top priority. The Maryland Constitution requires that the State provide a "thorough and efficient" system of public education; and MABE believes that this includes the duty to equitably provide safe, high quality school facilities in which all students can learn.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), enacted in 2015 as the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), reduced the scope of federally mandated reporting requirements, standards, and sanctions relating to student achievement. Importantly, ESSA eliminated adequate yearly progress (AYP) and proficiency requirements in favor of a state determined accountability system which must include the following components: improved student performance on state assessments, graduation rates, and English learner (EL) proficiency. Therefore, ESSA requires each state to set statewide, long-term goals and interim progress targets for improving outcomes for all students and student groups, including economically disadvantaged students, students from major ethnic and racial groups as defined by ESSA, children with disabilities, and English learners.

Maryland's Consolidated State Plan to implement ESSA includes the goal to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education and to close achievement gaps between children meeting the challenging State academic standards and those children who are not meeting such standards. A top priority for local boards of education continues to be eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps among all legally defined groups of students, with continuing emphasis on the gap between white students and students of African American and Hispanic heritage while also focusing on excellence for all students.

Again, MABE supports this legislation in order to direct the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) to establish a maximum gross area allowance (MGAA) for specified English learners (EL) that is equal to the MGAA for special education students.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 512.