

BILL: Senate Bill 165
TITLE: Safe Schools Maryland Act of 2019
DATE: February 6, 2019
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports Senate Bill 165, which would help ensure that appropriate procedures are established for the anonymous reporting of behaviors relating to school safety and security in Maryland's public schools.

MABE supports this legislation because it is intended to facilitate the development of high quality program to receive and respond to critical information received from students and others about activities or threats of activities of concern through the State's Safe Schools Maryland Tip Line. The Tip Line represents the State's commitment to advancing efforts to be immediately responsive to threats to school safety and security. MABE supports the privacy assurances included in this bill to facilitate the unimpeded reporting of information so vital to the safety of our students, staff, and communities.

Safety and security in public schools is extremely important to local boards of education for the protection of students and staff, as well as necessary to environments conducive to teaching and learning. MABE 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.

Following the tragic school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012, the State Board approved reforms to require evacuation, shelter in place, lockdown and other drills that all schools must conduct each year. And in 2013, with MABE's support, the Maryland Center for School Safety was created to facilitate coordination and collaboration between local school systems. Tragically, a mass school shooting occurred on Feb. 14, 2018 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida; and a school shooting occurred on March 20, 2018 at Great Mills High School in St. Mary's County, Maryland. These events led to broad bipartisan support for the Safe to Learn Act of 2018, which:

- Establishes a School Safety Subcabinet and Advisory Board and increases funding for the Maryland Center on School Safety (MCSS);
- Requires school systems to designate a certified school safety coordinator and to conduct annual safety evaluations of each school;
- Requires local school systems to designate a mental health services coordinator, and requires local assessment teams for the identification of, and intervention with, students or other individuals who may pose a threat to school safety;
- Requires all school resource officers (SROs) and school safety and security personnel to complete a specialized curriculum, and requires school systems to report on schools with assigned SROs and, if not, how adequate local law enforcement will be provided; and
- Provides significant initial funding for school facility upgrades and school safety and security programs.

MABE greatly appreciates the Governor's and General Assembly's ongoing funding and continued support for these programs and services. For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 165.