

BILL: Senate Bill 223
TITLE: State Department of Education - Guidelines on Trauma-Informed Approach
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
DATE: February 6, 2019
COMMITTEE: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports Senate Bill 223 to establish the Trauma-Informed Schools Initiative within the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to expand the use of trauma-informed approaches in schools and train schools on becoming trauma-informed schools.

This bill would require MSDE, in consultation with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and Department of Human Services (DHS), to develop and distribute guidelines on a trauma-informed approach that will assist public schools with the identification of a student, teacher, or staff member who has experienced trauma; the appropriate response to trauma; and becoming a trauma-informed school.

Local boards support the investment in pursuing this pilot program based on the growing awareness about the critical and detrimental role that trauma has in the lives and learning of so many of our students. For example, a report from the National Survey on Children's Health found that nearly 47 percent of all children in the United States have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience, or ACE, such as abuse or neglect, the death of a parent, or witnessing community violence in school or in the neighborhood. The report determined that nearly 22 percent of all children have experienced two or more ACEs.

Clearly, many students have had traumatic experiences and such trauma can impact learning, behavior and relationships in school. Trauma-informed schools can prepare educators and other school staff to help students feel safe to learn. The goal of this legislation is to develop guidelines for whole-school trauma-informed approaches to improve the educational opportunities for students.

MABE requests amendments to conform the bill to the Cross-filed House Bill 256 regarding the implementation timeline and to stipulate a required amount of funding to support the pilot program. This bill's cross-file, House Bill 256, would create the same trauma-informed schools expansion program fund and require the Governor to include \$300,000 for the program in the FY 2021 state budget.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 223, with the amendments described above.