

BILL: House Bill 1103
TITLE: Education - Public Schools - Threat Assessment Report
POSITION: OPPOSE
DATE: March 1, 2019
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the State's local boards of education, opposes House Bill 1103.

As this committee knows, 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.

MABE opposes the specified mandate that each public school keep hard copies of the School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective report published by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). MABE recognizes that this is one of many sources of valuable information available to school systems relating to the threat assessments, but certainly not appropriate to be mandated to be reproduced and located in each principal's and school counselor's office.

For example, the U.S. Secret Service, through its National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC), is a highly valued and respected source of information for local school systems. In July 2018, NTAC released "Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing School Violence." This guide covers the following essential policy and procedural components:

- Establishing multidisciplinary threat assessment teams;
- Defining concerning and prohibited behaviors;
- Creating a central reporting mechanism;
- Determining the threshold for law enforcement intervention;
- Establishing assessment procedures;
- Developing risk management options;
- Creating and promoting safe school climates; and
- Conducting training for all stakeholders.

MABE highlights the value of this U.S. Secret Service publication to point out that no single resource should be mandated to be printed and distributed.

In 2018, the General Assembly enacted the Maryland Safe to Learn Act with broad bipartisan support. This landmark legislation restructured the governance system for overseeing school safety policies and grants, called for staffing guidelines regarding adequate law enforcement coverage at all schools, and called for an expanded role of local school systems in coordinating students' mental health services.

The Safe to Learn Act, in part, required each school system to designate a school safety coordinator, who must be certified by the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCCS) and serve as the liaison between the school system, local law enforcement, and MCSS. By June 15, 2019, and regularly thereafter, each local school system must conduct a safety evaluation of each school to (1) identify and, if necessary, develop solutions for physical safety concerns and (2) identify and evaluate any patterns of safety concerns on school property or at school-sponsored events. By July 1, 2020, and regularly thereafter, each local school system must update the school emergency plan for each public school.

In addition, the law required that the State develop a model policy for the establishment of one or more assessment teams in each local school system. The model policy must include specified provisions generally related to (1) the identification of, and intervention with, students or other individuals who may pose a threat to school safety; (2) the composition and appropriate number of assessment teams within local school systems; and (3) training for the assessment teams.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 1103.