

BILL: House Bill 1349
TITLE: Public Schools - Student with Sickle Cell Disease - Revisions
DATE: March 27, 2019
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's local boards of education, supports House Bill 1349.

MABE supported the legislation passed in 2018 to ensure a high degree of care and heightened awareness among school personnel regarding the needs of students with sickle cell disease. Local boards of education place a very high priority on student health, by ensuring that schools are operating in accordance with adopted state school health guidelines and local policies and procedures intended to provide a health and safe school environment conducive to student learning.

Local boards endorsed the intent of the legislation enacted in 2018 to closely align the sickle cell disease school health initiative with the legislation enacted to address very similar concerns regarding the school health management system for students with diabetes. In 2016, a new law was enacted to require MSDE and DHMH to establish guidelines for public schools regarding the administration of health care services to students with diabetes and provide specified technical assistance to schools to implement the guidelines. In this content, MABE supports the need for House Bill 1349 to extend the deadlines by which guidelines must be developed and implemented by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH).

Local boards want to assure the legislature that local school systems are already operating in accordance with Maryland law that already provides for emergency care planning for all students under the Code of Maryland Regulations 7- 401 and 7-426. Sickle cell disease falls under these guidelines and ensures that students with sickle cell disease are able to access educational services and school activities. Similarly, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act protects students with sickle cell disease and their rights for accommodations in the school setting, just as it does for other students with other health conditions warranting educational accommodations. Specifically, accommodations for students with sickle cell disease may include water to ensure hydration, nursing services for pain management, training for school staff to identify symptoms which may indicate a crisis, the development of individualized healthcare plans and/or emergency care plans.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 1349.