

BILL: Senate Bill 954
TITLE: Education - Public and Nonpublic High Schools - Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Instruction
DATE: March 13, 2019
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
COMMITTEE: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports Senate Bill 954 with amendments.

MABE appreciates the intent of this legislation to ensure that high school students learn in health class about organ and tissue donation and registration. 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.

However, MABE generally opposes bills mandating a specific subject for curriculum and instruction, and therefore raises concerns about this bill's legislative intrusion into the responsibility and authority of the local school system to develop local curriculum in the context of state standards adopted under the authority of the State Board of Education.

For this reason, MABE requests an amendment to strike SHALL on page 1, in line 22, and replace with "MAY." Further, if this bill is enacted as a mandated subject for health education, MABE would urge the striking of subsection (B) in its entirety, as it would narrowly define the content of instruction on the subject of age-appropriate instruction on organ and tissue donation and registration.

There have been frequent attempts by the General Assembly in recent years to mandate public school health policy and procedures. MABE generally opposes these efforts in light of the local and state board of education role and responsibility to develop school system policy. That said, when priority issues such the heroin/opioid epidemic or reforms to state policy regarding students with diabetes do arise, MABE has participated in developing legislation to facilitate the role of school systems in advancing state policy goals.

Again, MABE supports collaboration between legislators and school systems regarding proposed policy changes on behalf of students, and yet MABE strongly believes that specific curriculum matters must be deliberated, decided, and implemented by local boards of education and school administrators.

For these reasons, MABE requests that the committee issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 915 with the amendments described above.