

BILL: Senate Bill 972
TITLE: Task Force on Educational Outcomes of Pregnant and Parenting Students in High School and GED Programs
POSITION: OPPOSE
DATE: March 13, 2019
COMMITTEE: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs 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 Senate Bill 972.

MABE opposes this bill primarily because we believe the issues surrounding the education of pregnant and parenting students are being adequately addressed today. MABE supported legislation in 2017 which passed, with amendments supported by MABE, to require that a student's absence due to pregnancy or parenting needs is a lawful absence. Under this recently enacted law, each local board of education must develop a written attendance policy for pregnant and parenting students that at least meets the following specified requirements:

The local board of education attendance policy must excuse all absences due to pregnancy- or parenting-related conditions, including absences for labor, delivery, recovery, and prenatal and postnatal medical appointments. The policy must also:

- provide at least 10 days of excused absences for a parenting student after the birth of the student's child;
- excuse parenting-related absences due to an illness or a medical appointment of the student's child, including up to four days of absences per school year for which the school may not require a note from a physician; and
- excuse any absence due to a legal appointment involving the pregnant or parenting student that is related to family law proceedings, including adoption, custody, and visitation.

In addition to home and hospital services, the school may allow the student to make up the work that the student missed in a time period that equals at least as many days that the student was absent. The student may choose one of the following alternatives to make up the missed work: retake a semester; participate in an online course credit recovery program; or allow the student six weeks to continue at the same pace and finish at a later date.

Lastly, MABE has serious concerns about the composition and structure of the proposed task force, and objects to any proposal to study a policy issue concerning public school systems without including any representation from local school systems.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 972.