

BILL: House Bill 347
TITLE: Education - Community and Local Accountability for Struggling Schools
(CLASS) Act of 2020 - Innovation Schools
DATE: February 19, 2020
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means Committee
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's local boards of education, opposes House Bill 347 because local boards support the continued implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) as governed by current state law and the State's ESSA Accountability Plan approved by the U.S. Department of Education. This plan is comprehensive, developed in accordance with federal and state law, and driving the work to improve school performance.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law on December 10, 2015 as the most recent version, or reauthorization, of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which was first enacted in 1965. ESSA replaced the longstanding, and often controversial, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. According to the U.S. Department of Education, "ESSA builds on ESEA's legacy as a civil rights law and seeks to ensure every child, regardless of race, income, background, or where they live has the chance to make of their lives what they will." ESSA, in general, returns to states the authority to determine state standards for student performance and the accountability system to measure that performance.

Importantly, Maryland enacted state legislation governing the ESSA State Accountability Plan. In 2017, the Maryland General Assembly passed the "Protect Our Schools Act", which specifies parameters for academic and school quality indicators; comprehensive and targeted support and improvement plans for low-performing schools and groups of students; and prohibits specified State-directed interventions. The bill also requires the State Board of Education to establish a composite score that provides for meaningful differentiation of schools and specifies how the composite score must be developed and reported (House Bill 978, Chapter 29, 2017 Laws of Maryland)..

MABE assures the General Assembly that ESSA already governs the process for identifying and responding to low-performing schools. As required under ESSA, for each public school identified by MSDE for comprehensive support and improvement, the local board must develop and implement a comprehensive support and improvement plan to improve student outcomes at the school. The State law requires that the State plan must: (1) be developed in consultation with principals, parents, local community leaders, local employer leaders, local government leaders, teachers, school staff, and the exclusive bargaining representative; (2) include the specified school quality indicators; (3) include evidence-based intervention; (4) be based on school-level needs assessments; and (5) identify resource inequities and budgetary needs. The school, local board of education, and MSDE must approve the plan. MSDE must then monitor and annually review the plan.

Clearly, Maryland has a school improvement and accountability framework in place that engages parents, school-based teachers and principals, and local boards of education. For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 347.