

BILL: House Bill 1089
TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education - Expansion of Mental Health Services and Prohibition of School Resource Officers (Police-Free Schools Act)
DATE: March 3, 2021
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 1089 in favor of preserving the local governance and policy-making authority granted in the Safe to Learn Act of 2018 to allow each local school system to determine whether and how to assign school resource officers (SROs) to schools or otherwise ensure adequate local law enforcement coverage.

MABE opposes House Bill 1089 because it would prohibit any assignment of local law enforcement officers as SROs to any public school in the State. Since 2018, State grants have assisted local governments in meeting the heightened expectations for school safety and the creation of a high quality SRO training program to ensure that these law enforcement officers perform their duties in accordance the school law and in the best interests of students.

In the 2021 session, MABE is supporting legislation, House Bill 522, to prohibit SROs from unilaterally enforcing discipline-related school policies, rules, regulations, or procedures to ensure that SROs do not make determinations regarding student discipline. This legislation is aligned with Maryland's training program for SROs and therefore the policies and procedures that should already in place regarding the appropriate role of SROs as it relates to students, educators, and administrators, and student disciplinary actions.

The General Assembly is to be commended for the clear direction of the Safe to Learn Act of 2018 to develop a comprehensive curriculum for all SROs and any other designated school security personnel. The multi-faceted role of SRO's is evident in the outline of the 40-hour, 5-day, mandatory curriculum for all SROs and school security staff.

- School Resource Officer: Definition & History of Role
- Memorandum of Agreement/Understanding (MOU) between the police department and the school
- Working Collaboratively with School Administration and Staff
- Restorative Practices in Schools: PBIS, School Based Mediation, and School to Prison Pipeline considerations and Implicit Bias
- Maintaining a Positive School Climate
- Victimization of Youth in Schools - Child Protective Services
- Informal Counseling Roles and Responsibilities
- Disability & Diversity Awareness with a focus on Inclusiveness and Cultural Fluency
- Implicit Bias
- Drug Education and Current Trends in Maryland Schools
- Investigation of Bullying, Threats & Social Media
- Principles of Effective Learning - The Expanding Role of an SRO as an Instructor
- Constructive Interactions with Students - Building Trust and Reducing Fear
- Collaboration and Problem Solving with Stakeholders
- Youth Development, Behavior and Discipline

MABE firmly 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. Therefore, we continue to urge federal, state, and local governments to ensure adequate and equitable funding for local public school safety and security programs, alternative education programs, and the wide array of behavioral health and public safety services provided by other public and private entities. MABE believes that this holistic approach is essential to maintaining safe schools and access to a high quality education for all of Maryland's students.

Therefore, MABE appreciate the focus of this legislation to invest significantly more through new State grants to assist local school systems hire more social workers, school psychologists, counselors, and other behavioral health specialists to expand the availability of school-based mental health services and behavioral supports for students. As the General Assembly continues to pursue reforms in school safety, ensuring increased investments in these mental and behavioral health services should remain a high priority. However, local boards seek to retain the authority to maintain SRO programs while also enhancing these other essential programs and services.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 1089.