

STUDENT HEALTH, NUTRITION & FITNESS

MABE POSITIONS

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education, representing all local boards of education in Maryland:

- ✓ **Supports** additional State and federal funding to ensure that all school systems, schools, and classrooms are prepared to offer safe and healthy learning environments for students and staff.
- ✓ **Supports** local board discretion to adopt policies and allocate resources to support improvements in student behavioral and physical health, nutrition, and fitness.
- ✓ **Supports** funding and policy decisions to strengthen school meal programs to provide healthy food for all students and expand access for economically disadvantaged students.
- ✗ **Opposes** mandates to expand the responsibility of public schools to provide physical and behavioral health services without adequate state, local, and federal funding.

BACKGROUND

Local boards have always placed a very high priority on providing school facilities, school meals, and programs of instruction designed to promote the physical and behavioral health and fitness of students and to prepare them to maintain a healthy lifestyle as adults. MABE advocates that legislation addressing specific student health issues such as diabetes, allergies, medical cannabis, and other chronic and acute conditions reflect the input of school health professionals and the consideration of available staff and resources.

For the past two 2 years the pandemic has presented enormous challenges in meeting the physical and mental health needs of students, requiring major changes in school meal programs, responses to the trauma caused by the economic, health, and educational impacts of the pandemic. In addition, the pandemic is imposing extraordinary burdens on school personnel to conduct contact tracing and other services related to the safe reopening and operation of schools. MABE believes it is critical that state and local budgets recognize these burdens and the associated costs.

Local boards recognize the state role in governing student and school health issues through laws and regulations and advocates that such requirements not be overly prescriptive, costly, or burdensome. MABE advocates that local school systems and our dedicated school nurses and other health professionals are consulted as new requirements for board policies and school-based practices are considered. Student health issues addressed in this manner include diabetes, anaphylactic allergies, sickle cell disease, medical cannabis, and concussions.

In 2017, MABE supported the Start Talking Maryland Act to expand drug education programs to include a unit on opioids; and require schools to provide naloxone. In addition, a 2016 law requires age-appropriate education on awareness and prevention of sexual abuse; a 2017 law requires suicide risk response training for all educators; and a 2020 law allows caregivers to administer medical cannabis to students on school premises.

MABE supports the State's charge to provide high quality physical education programs by providing a "challenging instructional program that advances the student's knowledge, confidence, skills, and motivation to engage successfully in a lifelong healthy and active lifestyle." State law requires physical education instruction for all students in grades kindergarten through 8, and through elective classes for students in grades 9 through 12. To enhance elementary school programs, MABE supported the law requiring all new elementary schools to include gymnasiums rather than multi-purpose cafeterias.

For many years MABE has led advocacy for federal and state legislation to improve and expand the scope of school meal programs, including the community eligibility provision (CEP) program providing free meals throughout high-poverty schools. Since 2015, the Grab & Go Meals in High Schools program has allowed breakfast to be served throughout schools; and a 2018 law phases-in state responsibility for the student share of the costs of reduced-price meals.

For additional information, see [MABE's Resolution on Student Health and Fitness](#).