

BILL: House Bill 1291
TITLE: Public Schools - Student Immunization Requirements - Authority
DATE: March 14, 2022
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations
Ways and Means
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 1291, which would limit the authority of local school systems to adopt local policies and procedures related to immunization requirements.

MABE generally opposes efforts by the General Assembly to legislate on a state-wide basis the inherently local personnel policies and administrative decisions based on local priorities available resources. House Bill 1291 would do so by establishing a new prohibition that local boards of education may not establish immunization requirements beyond those established in state regulations. MABE's opposition to this bill does not rest on an evaluation of the merits of any local board adding to the state-mandated immunizations but rather is grounded in MABE's consistent support for local governance and policy-making authority.

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 health personnel. MABE believes it is critical that state and local budgets recognize these burdens and the associated costs.

Local boards also recognize the state role in governing student and school health issues through laws and regulations and advocates that such requirements should 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.

Again, MABE objects to a new statutory limitation on local board authority to adopt school health policies. Each of Maryland's local boards and school systems have the governance authority to adopt vaccination policies and procedures and MABE supports their continued authority in this area.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 1291.