

**BILL:** Senate Bill 551  
**TITLE:** Education - Service Year Option Program - Establishment  
(Serving Every Region Through Vocational Exploration Act of 2023)  
**DATE:** February 22, 2023  
**POSITION:** SUPPORT  
**COMMITTEE:** Education, Energy, and the Environment  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports Senate Bill 551 which would establish a new state agency and program devoted to increasing the participation of Maryland's young adults in rewarding jobs in the fields of education, environment, and health. MABE supports the creation of this new program in order to bolster the framework of college and career readiness envisioned by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and further benefit the futures of our talented youth.

This legislation would establish the Service Year Option Program primarily as a supportive gateway to rewarding careers for recent high school graduates. The program is designed as an additional option to pursuing career and technical training or postsecondary education, which are supported by programs funded through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. MABE agrees that there is great value in promoting the value of careers in public impact employment, particularly considering the needs to recruit youth into educational and job training programs leading to employment in our public school systems. Local boards recognize the merits of providing participants in the program with not only job training but also mentoring and other supports while beginning to work and throughout the program year.

Senate Bill 551 articulates the key facets of the Service Year Option Program, including the responsibilities of the new Department of Service and Civic Innovation to administer the program. The legislation ensures that participants will be working at least 30 hours a week, being paid \$15 an hour, and supported by an on-site mentor. In addition, program participants who complete a year of service will be eligible for a stipend of up to \$3,000 from the department. Again, MABE greatly appreciates that the bill directs the new Department of Civic and Service Innovation to develop focus areas to address priority issues, including education, environment, and health.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 551.