

**BILL:** House Bill 1203  
**TITLE:** County Boards of Education and Public Schools - Committees and Task Forces - Open Meetings Act  
**DATE:** March 8, 2023  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 1203, which would subject all meetings regarding curriculum and instructional materials to the Maryland Open Meetings Act.

MABE's top legislative priority focuses on strong support for governance authority for local boards of education to adopt education policies and school system budgets reflecting local priorities and resources. MABE supports broad discretion for local board decision-making authority in exercising legislative, judicial, and executive functions in accord with state and federal law and principles of equity and excellence for all students. Specifically, MABE advocates that state and local initiatives not reduce local board governance or budgetary authority or create unfunded mandates.

MABE firmly believes that the local policy-making decision to establish and implement these procedures should remain within the purview of each local board of education. MABE believes the principle of local governance by boards of education is fundamental to a sound system of public education; and that a sound system of public education is fundamental to sustaining the well-educated citizenry essential to a flourishing democracy. By retaining decision-making authority at the local level, local boards of education can best balance educational practices, available resources to implement those practices, public input, and academic and financial accountability.

MABE recognizes that local school systems throughout Maryland have implemented measures to make content standards and curriculum materials more available and transparent to the public. MABE firmly believes that these decisions and local policies and procedures should continue to be governed at the local level. However, MABE does not support expanding the scope of the Open Meetings Act to the many ongoing professional discussions of curricular matters as proposed in House Bill 1203.

Each local board prides itself in holding a vital role in governing the local school system and engaging local communities and promoting participation by parents and other community members in the education process. This process should be positively re-enforced by the State, rather than responded to in a punitive manner. Local boards are the primary advocates for local, state, and federal funding to support the teaching and learning of students and efficient and effective school system administration. Through MABE's board development program and other professional development activities, each board is striving to continuously improve its ability to govern in a manner that best meets the needs of all students in the local school system.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 1203.