

BILL: House Bill 1140
TITLE: Education – Virtual Tutoring Services – Applicant Review
DATE: February 21, 2024
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports House Bill 1140 to improve the operation of the important legislation enacted in 2019 to require employer history reviews of all school employees to protect our students from potential abuse to a greater extent than provided by traditional criminal background checks. House Bill 1140 would do so by bringing tutors who work with students through virtual services must also be scrutinized through the same employer history review process.

MABE and all local boards place a very high priority on providing a well-rounded public education to students in a healthy learning environment with well-trained, professional educators, administrators, and staff dedicated to ensuring the highest degree of student safety. Based in part on several high profile and heinous child sexual abuse cases perpetrated by school employees, there arose a heightened awareness regarding the need to revisit longstanding practices and procedures in the hiring and, supervision, discipline and discharge of school employees based on a broad range of misconduct.

In 2019, MABE supported passage of legislation (House Bill 486) in order to establish and define the process of determining whether an applicant for employment with a local school system has ever been disciplined for allegations of “child sexual abuse” or “sexual misconduct.” The law was updated again in 2021 and MABE assures the legislature that the employer history review process is in place in all 24 local school systems. The law enacted in 2019 set forth a process, including requirements for specific documentation regarding whether an individual has ever been disciplined for allegations of “child sexual abuse” or “sexual misconduct,” for the hiring of public school and nonpublic school employees who have direct contact with minors. Importantly, the procedures and protections required by this law also applies to outside contractors whose employees also have direct contact with students.

Again, MABE believes House Bill 1140 is consistent with the significant improvements in recent years to secure the highest possible degree of safety for our nearly 900,000 public school students from the misconduct of school employees and the employees of contractors, including virtual tutoring services.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 1140.