

BILL: House Bill 758
TITLE: Criminal Law – Crime of Violence – Second Degree Assault of a School Employee or Subcontractor (School Assault Reduction and Prevention Act)
DATE: January 20, 2024
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports House Bill 758 to add the crime of assault on school employees to the criminal code. The safety of our devoted educators and staff is a high priority for all local boards of education. MABE supports this bill in order to enhance the tools available to prosecute offenses against our teachers and other employees.

All local boards of education value the essential role of the educators and staff persons who work for the public school system as the keys to educating and meeting the needs of our students. Therefore, MABE has consistently supported efforts by the General Assembly to assist local school systems in addressing the critical shortages of highly qualified teachers, principals, and other staff in every school and the classrooms of all students across the State. At this time, Maryland is experiencing critical shortages across all of the educational and related services professional fields; a critical shortage of the staff needed to deliver and support student learning and to administer schools as educational leaders. School “climate” and teaching conditions are often cited as sources of concern when the teacher shortage is discussed. Clarifying that the crime of assaulting an educator is specifically included in the law should contribute to greater awareness and ideally modify behaviors regarding this troubling behavior.

Local boards firmly believe that the role of a full complement of qualified staff, including large numbers of new teachers, will be pivotal to the successful implementation of Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. The Blueprint features major expansions of full-day prekindergarten, student behavioral health services, college readiness courses, and career and technical education programs. Passage of House Bill 758 could contribute to advancing the statewide effort to recruit, educate, and retain the professional educators essential to meet these objectives.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 758.