

BILL: House Bill 547
TITLE: Crime of Violence - Educational Facilities, Medical Facilities, and Places of
Worship - Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act)
DATE: February 13, 2024
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all twenty-four local boards of education, supports House Bill 547.

Safety and security in public schools is extremely important to local boards of education for the protection of students and staff, as well as necessary to environments conducive to teaching and learning. MABE fully supports state and local funding, programs, and policies to ensure that school systems are adopting and implementing high standards for school safety programs and the design and operation of school facilities.

MABE supports federal, State, and local government funding for local public school safety programs, facility upgrades, and the wide array of behavioral health and public safety services provided by other public and private entities, which are essential to maintaining safe and secure schools and access to an excellent education for all of Maryland's students. At the same time, MABE supports local discretion to adopt programs and policies to maintain and improve school safety and security.

House Bill 547 would strengthen the criminal prosecutorial tools available in those horrific cases in which acts of violence are perpetrated in schools, churches, and medical facilities. MABE firmly believes that safety in public schools is the joint responsibility of local boards of education, school administrators and staff, students, parents and guardians, law enforcement and other public safety agencies, human services agencies, and the community in general. In this context, MABE supports House Bill 547 as enhancing the tools available to prosecutors responding to violent crimes committed in schools.

MABE continues to support legislative and funding initiatives to strengthen school security and provide the maximum amount of school safety assurances for our students – our children. Maryland has a strong record of continuous improvement in student and school safety, and MABE is confident we will continue to do so.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 547.