

BILL: Senate Bill 1081
TITLE: Education - Public Schools - Driver Education and Transportation to Field Trips
DATE: March 6, 2024
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Budget and Taxation
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports Senate Bill 1081 to establish the Driver Education in Public Schools Grant Program to provide grants to public schools and nonprofit organizations to assist in offering driver education courses to students. In addition, the bill would establish the State Aided Institutions Field Trip Grant Program to assist public schools in transporting students on field trips to these State–aided educational institutions.

MABE believes that the programs proposed by this legislation will meaningfully enhance equitable student access to well-rounded educational experiences. MABE has always supported the State Aided Institutions Program, which includes many wonderful museums, theaters, nature centers, and a variety of other programs, as described below:

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) provides annual grants to qualified non-profit organizations that provide enriching, educational programs to Maryland students. Eligible programs provide learning experiences that align to the State’s curricular and educational priorities and cannot be replicated in the classroom.

These educational opportunities emphasize experiential learning and one-on-one support services. This includes, but is not limited to, free or reduced admission, full-day and residential field trips with hands-on activities, mentoring, and tutoring. Pre- and post- visit activities for teachers can be used to connect the experiences to the classroom curriculum. In addition, professional development opportunities for teachers that link the SAI programs to the classroom are also funded.

Importantly, MABE has adopted Educational Equity as a core value. MABE’s equity core value states: “We champion educational equity and excellence for each student.” MABE’s definition of educational equity states: "For MABE, educational equity in Maryland means providing access to essential academic, social, emotional, and economic supports in order to engage each student in rigorous instruction with appropriate educational resources to achieve their highest potential." The association takes very seriously the consideration of educational equity in adopting legislative priorities and bill positions.

In this light, MABE supports the thoughtful expansion of equitable student access to educational enrichment experiences through field trips to State Aided Institutions, as well as improved access to drivers education and the expanded economic opportunities for our state’s youth with drivers licenses.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 1081.