

March 27, 2023

Dear Delegate/Senator:

As members of the Board of Education of Harford County, we are contacting you to share our strong opposition to House bill 119 (HB119), cross-filed with Senate bill 199 (SB199). This bill was introduced to require local school systems to adopt a state mandated health curriculum. As written, the bill caused grave concerns at the local level. The bill has been amended and with the amendments, would place local school systems in a dire position. HB119, as passed out of the House Ways and Means Committee, is a total Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) takeover of all curriculum frameworks, standards, and even instructional materials-removing any local oversight of curriculum development. We urge you to oppose HB119/SB199.

This bill mandates that local school systems follow, "every element of the policy and guidelines for the program of instruction" for public schools established by MSDE. The bill also mandates that, "all curriculum guides, courses of study, resource materials and other teaching aids," shall be in accordance with the MSDE policy and program of instruction adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education.

In these alarming and unprecedented ways, HB119 reaches into the boardroom and the classroom, severely limiting decision making of local boards, superintendents, department chairs, and, most importantly, teachers in the classroom.

We are further troubled by HB119 as it empowers the State Superintendent of Schools to enforce local compliance by withholding massive amounts of state funding. HB119 grants absolute authority to the State Superintendent to decide if a local school system is not following every detail of the state standards and then instruct the state comptroller to withhold millions of dollars in state funding from the local school system.

As members of the Board of Education of Harford County, we hope that you agree with the Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) and will support efforts to ensure continued local decision-making authority in developing curriculum, assessments, grading policies, and instructional programs. The adoption of statewide laws and regulations that reflect a commitment to local governance, professional judgment of local educators, and community engagement, is essential to the success of public school systems. HB119 fails this test.

For these reasons, we ask for your commitment to oppose HB119/SB199 becoming law. We thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely, we the undersigned Board of Education of Harford County Members,