

BILL: House Bill 1401
TITLE: State Department of Education – Oral Health Education –
Certification and Monitoring
POSITION: OPPOSE
DATE: March 20, 2012
COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means Committee
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's boards of education, opposes House Bill 1401.

MABE appreciates the legislature's interest in ensuring that oral health is included in the scope of health education. However, local boards respectfully request restraint in the practice of identifying in statute specific issues, topics, or subject matters mandated for student instruction. In this instance, House Bill 1401 would amend current law to specify that as school systems provide "instruction in health education, including the importance of physical activity, ORAL DISEASE PREVENTION, AND DENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION in maintaining good health."

Not surprisingly, the state curriculum approved by the State Board of Education already includes "Personal and Consumer Health" standards that address oral health. For example, Standard 3.0 for Grade 1 specifies that "Students will demonstrate the ability to use consumer knowledge, skills, and strategies to develop sound personal health practices involving the use of health care products, services, and community resources." Specifically, under the subheading "Personal Health Maintenance", Maryland's state curriculum already requires that students are to be instructed in "ways to promote dental health such as brushing and flossing teeth, visiting dentist, and eating healthy foods."

Local boards of education have no objection to the Maryland State Department of Education performing its essential role of supporting, facilitating, monitoring, and reporting on the implementation by local school systems of student health education generally, which would of course include oral health. However, local boards do not support the piecemeal addition of a separate monitoring and reporting requirement specific to oral health.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 1401.