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BILL: Senate Bill 1041  
TITLE: Education – Digital Equity for All Act  
DATE: March 16, 2016  
POSITION: OPPOSE  
COMMITTEE: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs  
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Senate Bill 1041 requires the State Department of Education to develop and adopt specified infrastructure standards on or before December 1, 2016; requires specified local school systems to meet specified infrastructure standards and implement and consider specified policies related to specified digital devices for specified purposes on or before December 1, 2019; establishes the Digital Equity for All Grant Program and providing for the purpose and duration of the Program; and requires the Department to administer the Program.

PSSAM appreciate the intent of Senate Bill 1041, however, we must **oppose** this bill. Local superintendents continue to advocate for local board of education governance of teaching and learning, including the use of technology in the classroom. We strongly believe that it is critical that locally-governed education policies and procedures remain under the authority of local boards of education. Each local school board must have the flexibility to develop individual policies and practices that reflect the specific and diverse needs of their system.

In addition, PSSAM also **opposes** Senate Bill 1041 as an unfunded mandate. We strongly believe in providing digital equity in our classrooms. PSSAM is very appreciative of the \$3.5 million per year provided by the Digital Equity for All Grant Program. However, for most school systems there would be a large fiscal impact bill to meet the requirement level of one device per student by 2019. There are enormous school technology costs that are not covered by the Digital Equity for All Grant Program. Local school systems collectively serve more than 860,000 students. Without additional State funding, the goal of this legislation cannot be met with serious consequences.

Finally, local school boards do not have taxing authority and are fiscally dependent upon State and local funding. Without an adequate funding source, local school systems would be required to find a cost reduction within its budget, which could, in the worst case scenario, mean reducing the number of teachers to provide digital equity in our classrooms.

For the reasons stated above, PSSAM **OPPOSES** Senate Bill 1041 and requests an **unfavorable** committee report.