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BILL: Senate Bill 764
TITLE: Education – Student Journalists – Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Press
DATE: March 29, 2016
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Appropriations
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Senate Bill 764 authorizes student journalists at public schools and public institutions of higher education to exercise freedom of speech and freedom of the press in school-sponsored media; specifies that these freedoms are not limited by the fact that the media is supported financially by the school system, the school, or the institution of higher education, or by use of the facilities of the school or institution; and prohibits the discipline of student journalists and student media advisors who comply with the Act.

PSSAM appreciates the intent of Senate Bill 764. However, we respectfully **oppose** this bill.

PSSAM 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 student policies and practices that reflect the specific and diverse needs of their system.

High school journalism best serves learners and the school community when students are given the opportunity to produce responsible news media by balancing rights, responsibilities, and ethics to meet the need and interests of their school communities. Freedom of speech and freedom of the press are always paramount in decision-making by school and school system leadership. Maryland local school systems have policies regarding any material that is prepared, written, published, or broadcast by a student journalist. Student media advisors help to guide our high school journalists from initial concept to a final product that is a lasting tribute to everyone involved during the process.

PSSAM believes that legislation for high school journalists is not necessary. Again, we reiterate that it is critical that locally-governed education policies and procedures remain under the authority of local boards of education.

For the reasons stated above, PSSAM **OPPOSES** Senate Bill 764 and requests an **unfavorable** committee report.