



Renee Spence, Executive Director
9 Trotters Ridge Court, Catonsville, MD 21228
410-925-2183
pssamed@gmail.com

BILL: Senate Bill 786
TITLE: Education – Assessments – Best Practices in the Administration of Assessments
DATE: March 3, 2016
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs
CONTACT: Renee McGuirk Spence, Executive Director, PSSAM
Email: pssamed@gmail.com; Cell: 410-925-2183

Senate Bill 786 requires the State Department of Education to develop a specified set of best practices that the Department and specified local school systems must consider when deciding whether to administer an assessment or a test to students; requires the Department and specified local school systems to conduct a specified audit of specified assessments; and encourages the Department and specified local school systems to apply for specified federal funds to conduct specified audits.

PSSAM **opposes** Senate Bill 786. 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 assessment policies and practices that reflect the specific and diverse needs of their system. It is also important to note that much has been happening on the issue of testing.

Last year's 2015 legislative session passed House Bill 452, creating the Commission to Review the Use of Assessments and Testing in Maryland Public Schools. The legislation required the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to conduct a statewide survey to identify local, state, and federally-mandated assessments by August 2015. The recently released report, MSDE's Report on Local, State and Federally Mandated Assessments in Maryland, contains more than 300 pages with input from all twenty-four school systems. It provided local superintendents the opportunity to receive additional information about the assessments given and how the data is used in other districts.

PSSAM states that the MSDE assessment report is valuable and provides a wealth of data. The next step is for the Commission to hold several additional meetings and issue their final report by July 1, 2016. The report will make recommendations on how local school systems and MSDE can improve the process regarding the administration of local, state, and federally mandated assessments.

PSSAM believes that Senate Bill 786, although well-intentioned, is ill-timed. A better course of action would be to allow the current Commission to complete their legislated charge and release their findings before additional legislation is enacted. PSSAM will continue to advocate for local board of education governance of teaching and learning as well as the assessments used to measure student learning. However, we await the Commission's report and will work collaboratively to benefit all Maryland students.

For the reasons stated above, PSSAM **OPPOSES** Senate Bill 786 and requests an **unfavorable** committee report.