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BILL: Senate Bill 794
TITLE: Education – Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Assessments - Administration
DATE: March 2, 2016
POSITION: Oppose
COMMITTEE: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs
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Senate Bill 794 requires a specified statewide kindergarten assessment to be limited to a random sample of specified kindergarten students from within specified local school systems in the State; authorizes a specified kindergarten assessment to evaluate specified skills; prohibits specified standardized tests from being administered to specified prekindergarten students; and requires the State Department of Education to adopt specified regulations.

PSSAM **opposes** Senate Bill 794. 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 five 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 794, 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 794 and requests an **unfavorable** committee report.