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BILL: House Bill 75
TITLE: Education – Graduation Requirements – Fine Arts
DATE: February 2, 2017
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
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House Bill 75 specifies that a requirement to earn a credit in fine arts in order to graduate from a public high school may be satisfied by completing a course in computer science, multimedia, or computer programming.

PSSAM strongly **opposes** this bill. Local superintendents firmly believe in the value of a credit in the fine arts as a graduation requirement.

The arts are a critical component of Maryland public education. Students who study the arts during their PreK-12 education are taught the skills and capacities that can lead them to become creative, innovative voices in the scientific and business sectors, active audience members and contributors to the cultural community, teachers of the arts, and artists. Dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts are core academic subjects that need to be part of every child's education. The high school graduation credit is an important component to the high school years of arts education instruction. As such, PSSAM cannot support the substitution of a credit in computer science, multimedia, or computer programming in place of the fine arts credit.

In October 2013, the Governor's P-20 Leadership Council Task Force on Arts Education in Maryland Schools was established and charged with creating a plan that ensures a quality arts education for all Maryland students. Following extensive research, guidance from numerous experts in the field of fine arts education, and input from a wide variety of stakeholders, the Task Force issued its final report in September 2014. For the past two years, PSSAM, in partnership with the Maryland State Board of Education, the State Superintendent, and the Arts Education in Maryland Alliance, have been working diligently to address the Task Force's ten recommendations. Now is not the time to jeopardize the progress that has been made to maintain the arts as a major instructional focus.

In addition, local superintendents continue to advocate for local board of education governance of teaching and learning. 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 curriculum policies and practices that reflect the specific and diverse needs of their system.

PSSAM again reiterates that we will continue to oppose all attempts to legislate curriculum, courses of study, or graduation requirements. We firmly believe that this role belongs to local boards of education working together with the State Board of Education.

For the reasons noted above, PSSAM **OPPOSES** House Bill 75 and requests an **unfavorable** committee report.