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BILL: House Bill 978
TITLE: Education - Accountability - Consolidated State Plan and Support and Improvement Plans (Protect Our Schools Act of 2017)
DATE: February 28, 2017
POSITION: SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENTS
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
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House Bill 978 requires an educational accountability program to include at least three school quality indicators; prohibits the school quality indicators from being based on student testing; requires academic and school quality indicators to be given equal weight; and requires a county board of education to develop and implement a Comprehensive Support and Improvement Plan for specified schools under specified circumstances.

PSSAM supports with amendments House Bill 978.

With the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in December of 2015, the Bipartisan education law was titled Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and gave states and therefore state and local boards more authority and flexibility over education decision making. Realizing a one size fits all approach in public education did not work well for the nation as a whole, states began restructuring their state accountability plans for submission to the U.S. Department of Education in 2017.

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) established the “Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Stakeholder Committee,” which has been meeting for the past 18 months, to participate in the development of Maryland’s State Plan to implement ESSA. Stakeholders include MSEA, BTU, MABE, PSSAM and many other education advocacy groups. PSSAM has two local superintendents participating actively on this workgroup.

Traditionally, PSSAM has opposed legislation from the General Assembly to mandate education policy and curriculum. However, we feel if this legislation is moving forward, we would like a seat at the table since our education leadership has the direct oversight into the actual implementation of the law. We are hoping the education subcommittees in the House and Senate will have workgroups to more clearly define what they believe should be included or not included in Maryland’s ESSA plan submission.

In House Hill 978, on page 4, we believe we should either strike the listing of school quality indicators all together or if that is not viable then we believe adding more choices to the elementary and middle school list is appropriate. In summary, if this bill were to move forward, PSSAM could support it if there were changes that allowed for information to be either included or deleted. For example, we would like to point out that there are seven school quality indicators for secondary schools (class size; case load; school climate surveys; opportunities to enroll in Advanced Placement courses and International Baccalaureate Programs; opportunities for dual enrollment; opportunities to enroll in career

and technology education programs; and opportunities for industry certification). However, there are four that apply to elementary and middle schools (class size; case load; chronic absenteeism; and school climate surveys). PSSAM would like to suggest increasing the elementary and middle school list to include access to effective teachers, well-rounded curriculum, discipline, data, and on-track for 9th grade (for middle schools).

In addition, if we decide that we are including school quality indicators in statute then we should also include the Academic indicators. Both academic and school quality indicators are used in determining progress and we have concerns about putting a percentage for the composite score in law. What would be the appropriate percentage to use? How was the 51% determined? Why not 60% or 70% or higher? Are we selecting an arbitrary percentage? We believe that this determination should be made by psychometricians and education professionals who are experts in this field.

When identifying comprehensive and targeted schools for comprehensive support and improvement on page 6, line 24, we believe parents and community members should be added to those who will be consulting on the plan. Teachers are already included in the consultation list, so we question the need for the exclusive bargaining representative.

On page 7, line 1 in section (3) we would strike "THE SCHOOL AND" from the approval process. We believe this should be the sole responsibility of the county board. Policy and practice decisions must be made at the school system level and not at the individual school level. Also, we firmly believe that there must not be any component of this legislation that in any way changes the current and existing collective bargaining agreements in our systems.

Finally, although we philosophically have serious concerns about legislating state policies of what county boards can and cannot do relative to any education and intervention strategies, we strongly agree with the listing on page 8 lines 9-14. As local superintendents, we must implement education instruction strategies for all Maryland's public school students and as a state education system that still ranks in the top of the nation, we must continue to support public school strategies at all costs. Together as superintendents, we represent one voice and one vision for all Maryland's public school students and believe strongly in our current system of education delivery for all.

For the reasons stated above, PSSAM **supports with amendments** House Bill 978.