



Senate Bill 734

Education – Students With Reading Difficulties – Screenings and Interventions

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs Committee

Date: February 26, 2019

From: Michael Sanderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 734. This bill would statutorily dictate that local boards of education provide specific screening to identify students at risk for reading difficulties. Counties are concerned this legislation places a substantial administrative and cost burden onto local boards of education, whose operations are supported by county funding. Without state resources to offset these potentially large costs, the bill represents an unfunded mandate on local governments.

Local boards of education currently establish educational goals and objectives that conform with statewide educational objectives for subject areas including reading, writing, science, mathematics, and social studies. SB 734 requires local boards of education to implement prescriptive literacy screening standards, develop individualized reading intervention programs, and comply with onerous reporting requirements.

As a rule, MACo resists state policies that result in costly or burdensome local implementation. This bill would result in substantial costs to local boards of education, which are charged with purchasing the required screening tools and administering reading intervention programs. Local boards of education indicate costs will increase by millions of dollars.

Furthermore, the process of training employees to administer and interpret literacy screenings, providing questionnaires and progress reports to parents or guardians, and preparing reports for the Maryland State Department of Education will take a substantial amount of time, which could divert resources from other efforts.

This bill would place a costly mandate on county governments to carry out new state policy. Accordingly, without funds and possible technical assistance to suitably implement the bill's requirements, MACo urges the Committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report on SB 734.