



American Academy of Pediatrics
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™
Maryland Chapter



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TO: The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser, Chair
Members, House Ways and Means Committee
The Honorable Steven J. Arentz

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
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DATE: February 24, 2017

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 866 – *Primary and Secondary Education – Health and Safety Guidelines and Procedures – Digital Devices*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi) and the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP) submit this letter of **support** for House Bill 866.

House Bill 866 Requires the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), in consultation with the State Department of Education (MSDE), to develop health and safety guidelines and procedures for the use of digital devices in public school classrooms. Each county board of education is then required to implement the health and safety guidelines and procedures developed by DHMH and MSDE beginning in the 2018-2019 school year.

House Bill 866 aims to create a consistent regulatory structure for the use of digital devices in all public schools in Maryland. There is a growing body of evidence that there are serious potential health risks for children associated with excessive use of digital devices. While advances in and access to technology have enhanced educational opportunities for children; technology access can also present potential risks, if not regulated appropriately. It is critical that health and safety guidelines be developed to ensure that those risks are accounted for in the use of digital devices in the classrooms.

It is also important that there is consistency across all school districts. Currently there is a patchwork of policies and guidelines, in various school districts throughout the State, related to digital device use – with little evidence that existing policies consider potential health and safety risks. The approach provided in House Bill 866 requires State level development of the guidelines, policies, and procedures that will reflect both health and safety as well as educational objectives. The comprehensive framework that results from that effort can then be adopted at the County level to ensure consistency statewide. It is an excellent approach to a challenging problem. Medchi and MDAAP strongly urge a favorable report.

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