



BILL: House Bill 355
TITLE: Accountability in Education Act of 2018
DATE: March 1, 2018
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
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House Bill 355 establishes the Education Monitoring Unit in the State; providing that the Unit is an independent unit; establishing the Investigator General Selection and Review Commission in the Unit; requiring the Commission to appoint the Investigator General in accordance with certain procedures; requiring the Unit to investigate certain complaints; requiring the Unit to establish an anonymous electronic tip program; requiring the Unit to submit an annual report by December 15 to the State Board, the Governor, and the General Assembly; etc.

PSSAM strongly **opposes** House Bill 355. Local superintendents are held accountable by local, state and federal law, our communities, and the public-at-large for student success and the prudent spending of taxpayer dollars. PSSAM believes the accountability systems for student performance, financial management, and school system operations are sound and effective measures.

Local school systems are held strictly accountable for student performance by federal law. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) holds states and local school systems accountable for student growth and school improvement. The Maryland State Department of Education and the State Board of Education monitor, oversee, and enforce strong student accountability measures.

Local school systems are also held accountable for fiscal financial management through multiple annual audits and routine, comprehensive legislative audits. If a school system is not in compliance with state fiscal requirements, the State Superintendent can withhold state funding. Accountability measures at the local level also include public and transparent policy and budget debates.

Another example of state oversight is the Maryland Department of Human Resources that handles issues such as child abuse, neglect, and safety. The Interagency Committee on School Construction provides oversight of educational facilities. In addition, the Public School Employee Whistleblower Protection Act holds school systems accountable by protecting employees who report violations of law, regulation, or policy. The new law protects any school employee who reports (1) an abuse of authority, gross mismanagement, or gross waste of money; (2) a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety; or (3) a violation of law.

For the reasons stated above, PSSAM **opposes** House Bill 355 and urges an unfavorable committee report.