The Anne Arundel County Board of Education OPPOSES Senate Bill 1089 - Primary and Secondary Education - Health and Safety Guidelines and Procedures - Digital Devices. This bill would require the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), in consultation with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), to develop health and safety guidelines for the use of digital devices in public school classrooms. Beginning in the 2018-2019 school year, each local board of education would be required to implement the health and safety guidelines and procedures for the use of digital devices in public school classrooms specified in the bill.

The Anne Arundel County Board of Education opposes legislative, executive, or agency initiatives that have the effect of reducing or circumscribing local board authority or which create unfunded mandates. Senate Bill 1089 impedes with the authority of county boards of education and imposes a mandate as it would require school systems to comply with State guidelines once they are developed. The Anne Arundel County Board of Education believes that effective reform takes place best through county board collaboration and cooperative planning within the local community rather than through top-down decisions such as Senate Bill 1089. By retaining decision-making authority at the local level, county boards of education can best balance educational practices, available resources to implement those practices, public input, and accountability.

Student safety in public schools remains increasingly important to local boards of education, and the Anne Arundel County Board of Education supports legislation and program initiatives that contribute to the safety and well-being of students in school and in the community. The students of today are 21st century learners who require various instructional approaches and tools to help them learn. Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) supports the instructional use of digital devices as well as other computing devices such as desktop computers and laptop computers. These devices are intended to provide supplemental support to the instruction already being taught in the school in a manner that is relevant to the technology being utilized in our current world. Offering technological opportunities allows AACPS help to prepare students for college and career readiness through access to online learning, educational technologies, and high-quality digital content. This will, in turn, provide equitable access to current and emerging technologies for all students and educators and expanded opportunities for parents, families and the community.

Accordingly, the Anne Arundel County Board of Education respectfully urges an UNFAVORABLE committee report on Senate Bill 1089.