



[Secular Coalition for Maryland](http://secular.org) Secular Coalition for
America <http://secular.org>

February 26, 2020

The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser
Ways and Means Committee
Room 130, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Re: SUPPORT HB1204 (SB0993) County Boards and Public and Nonpublic Prekindergarten
Programs and Schools – Discrimination – Prohibition

Chairwoman and Members of the Committee:

Invidious discrimination hurts us as a society, it divides people and impedes people from realizing their potential. The government sector in particular has a responsibility to not participate in, or otherwise facilitate, invidious discrimination. There should be no exception for government education policy. This bill requiring all elementary and secondary schools receiving government funding to uphold government non-discrimination standards, with strengthened enforcement procedures, is welcome. The Secular Coalition for Maryland recommends this bill for approval by the General Assembly.

Everyone wants their children to be safe. Too often people who are unlike ourselves are seen as threatening, triggering misdirected fear. Minorities can be vulnerable to negative stereotyping. Some theists deem non-theism to be peculiar, unreasonable, or threatening. They misunderstand non-theism and may associate non-theism with negative behavior. The metaphysical naturalism underlying non-theism is an intellectual conclusion that non-theists (deists, agnostics, atheists) sincerely consider to be more compelling than the competing conclusions.

Government funding of nonpublic school education too often disregards invidious discrimination against religious belief dissenters such as non-theists. Without this proposed revision to the law

it is more likely that some of the government subsidized nonpublic schools will discriminate against non-theists. Our laws should state firmly and clearly: Government's nondiscrimination obligations will not be circumvented by government funding of third parties who discriminate.