

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 870 – Baltimore City Youth Data Hub

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The Baltimore City Public School System (City Schools) supports SB870, which seeks to establish an integrated electronic data management system for the purpose of information-sharing across multiple public agencies and nonprofits serving young people. The goal of the proposed “Baltimore City Youth Data Hub” is to promote the health, safety, security and well-being of youth, and to improve equitable access to and overall cost-efficiency of programs serving youth.

City Schools has long been a partner in envisioning a method for Baltimore City whereby organizations can engage in data sharing in ways that lead to improved service delivery to young people. Specifically, Baltimore’s youth currently receive services from multiple public agencies and nonprofits. These organizations all collect data, but they do not – or legally can’t – share that data with other agencies that support many of the same youth. This lack of information-sharing prevents Baltimore from strategically, effectively, and equitably meeting its young people’s needs. This disjointed approach to service delivery coupled with a lack of transparency, only exacerbates the current and historical inequities City Schools seeks to eliminate.

Building on many of the emerging best practices of other cities, SB870 seeks to develop a collaborative “Hub” to link data across youth-serving organizations into an anonymous system subject to community oversight and strict guidelines, to improve education, health, housing, employment, and other quality of life outcomes for the City’s young people. The “Baltimore Youth Data Hub” will bring communities, providers, policymakers, and researchers into partnership, to make informed decisions as they create and implement programs and policies designed to eliminate disparities and achieve equitable outcomes for the success of Baltimore’s youth and families.

As the public school system partner in this endeavor, City Schools recognizes that efforts to tackle challenges in education – as well as health, public safety, and economic opportunity – are often limited by data silos which create a fragmented picture of services and risks shaping the lives of young people. City Schools looks forward to partnering with our sister agencies at the Baltimore City Health Department, the Mayor’s Office for Children and Family Success, and the Mayor’s Office of Employment Development among others, to establish this data-sharing platform. It is our shared goal that the Youth Data Hub will provide a secure system of inquiry enabling agencies and policymakers to make decisions on the complex needs facing our youth and families as they interact with multiple systems.

City Schools looks forward to fulfilling its role as a data provider to the Hub, and to ensuring the establishment of the necessary technology to build and deliver the data sets required for approved projects. In these challenging times, especially as we continue to face the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever to establish a permanent and sustained cross-agency data sharing infrastructure to facilitate better coordination, inform decision-making, understand service utilization partners, support better program planning, and inform the effective use of target resources. For all these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable committee report of SB870.