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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 2, 2022

Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

**SB887 - Favorable – Primary and Secondary Education – Title IX – Policies  
and Procedures (Hear Our Voices Act)**

Senate Bill 887 is an update of the Title IX policy to provide students the tools to have their voices heard. There is a shocking number of sexual assault victims across the state in grades K through 12. We are open to suggestions to improve the bill but unfortunately the need for an updated policy in this space is self-evident based on the cases and circumstances we are seeing. Children should feel confident to report their abuse to not only get services themselves but prevent the abuser from moving onto the next target, and the next and next.

This legislation helps combat sexual misconduct in our schools with a proactive approach. Too often coercive relationships are developed in school settings and go unreported because there is fear of reprisal, embarrassment or just misunderstanding of what reasonable conduct may be. The bill simply requires the Maryland State Department of Education to develop a database for administrators to upload sexual misconduct complaints. Then a public school must notify the parent or guardian of a student who files a complaint, collect data on sexual misconduct complaints and reports the data to MSDE, and finally informs students, faculty and staff regarding who serves as the Title IX coordinator for the school and how to file a sexual misconduct complaint. There is civil liability attached if a local school system fails to comply.

We are open to a friendly amendment to confront some concerns raised during the House Bill hearing. If a student has an unsupportive parent and there is a “significant risk of harm” to the student from notifying a parent of a complaint related to sexual misconduct, the school may provide notification to another responsible professional or adult to facilitate parental involvement.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable committee report on SB 887, with a friendly amendment as discussed above and elaborated upon during our discussions today.