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SB 199

February 8, 2023

TO: Members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Interim Director of Government Relations
RE: Senate Bill 199 – Primary and Secondary Education – Comprehensive Health Education Framework - Established
POSITION: Support

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 199.

This legislation would require the State Department of Education, in collaboration with Maryland Department of Health, to develop a comprehensive health education framework, as well as require each county board of education to create an age-appropriate curriculum that is consistent with the comprehensive health education framework.

Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) and City Schools have been working in tandem towards a comprehensive framework. SB199 would not only fill the gaps, but would allow students the opportunity to receive developmentally appropriate health education and strengthen their ability to create a deeper understanding of body autonomy, health relationships, and consent.

All citizens, including our youngest ones, deserve the education to build a foundation that allows them to make meaningful decisions about their lives and futures; and this requires comprehensive education with access to information, resources and services they need to make informed, supported decisions about their bodies and relationships. To this end, the BCA believes that the City of Baltimore's young people deserves health education that is age-appropriate, medically accurate and comprehensive.

Young people who do not receive comprehensive health education may enter adolescence and adulthood ill-informed and miseducated. They likely enter into becoming sexually active early and enter into relationships without the knowledge they need to act responsibly and safely. If 18-year-olds are allowed to marry in Maryland, we owe them a comprehensive health education that will keep a young person of this age safe.

Stakes are high and time is of the essence for youth in our city. Lack of comprehensive health education can lead to unintended pregnancies, sexual assault, harmful relationships, STIs, and discrimination. Comprehensive health education is not just necessary, it is critical to the overall wellbeing, health literacy, overall educational achievement, and success that we want for our youth.

Passing this bill will help alleviate our public health crisis; lessen health and economic disparities based on gender and race; and increase dignity and reduce stress among our citizens. For these reasons, the BCA respectfully request a **favorable** report on SB199.