



WICOMICO COUNTY, MARYLAND

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House Ways and Means Committee
Attn: Hon. Delegate / Chairwoman Vanessa E. Atterbeary
Room 131
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: MD 2023 HB 119 Primary and Secondary Education – Comprehensive Health Education Framework – Established

Delegate / Chairwoman Atterbeary & Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

Please accept this as a letter of opposition for *MD 2023 HB 119 Primary and Secondary Education – Comprehensive Health Education Framework – Established*.

As County Executive of Wicomico County and a previous educator in the Wicomico County Public Schools for over 17 years, I write to this committee with concerns of this proposed legislation. On the surface, a health education plan seems beneficial, but taking a closer look, the specific content of this bill it raises some areas of concerns, particularly where “Gender Identity”, “Sexual Orientation”, “Family Life”, and “Human Sexuality” are mentioned.

Since Covid, we have seen so many students suffering from learning loss and mental health issues. I am in support totally helping students who are struggling and suffering with particular issues, but this seems to make teachers more than just educators of their content. I was an English teacher and while I cared about my students, I was not a guidance counselor, mental health professional, psychiatrist or a doctor. There seems to be a push to make teachers all of the above with their students. Education needs to focus on traditional methodology which includes reading writing, and arithmetic. We also should be focusing on preparing students for college or the workforce for a better life and prosperity.

Currently in Maryland, we are seeing many issues with education the massive implementation of the Kirwan Blue Print and the stress that is putting on school systems. School districts are suffering from teacher shortages as it was reported last academic school year that 9.1% of Maryland teachers left the profession altogether. It was also noted that students were struggling in subjects like math, where only 18% of 6th graders in the state were considered proficient. I think we need to focus on addressing these issues right now instead of another massive one size fits all plan from the state for health education.

In closing, I am not against health education as it is important and matters. I am also in favor of school systems bringing in mental health professionals to help assist students who are suffering from issues. However, as a teacher, parent, and now County Executive, I am concerned with the specifics of this bill, which is more than just a health education plan.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the committee for an unfavorable report for *MD 2023 HB 119 Primary and Secondary Education – Comprehensive Health Education Framework - Established*

Thank You,

Julie M. Giordano
Wicomico County Executive