

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: 416 Public Schools - Public Schools - Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings - Requirements

Submitted by: Dr. Nicole Hollywood, Board Member

Position: SUPPORT

Greetings. My name is Nicole Hollywood. I am a professor in the University System of Maryland, a resident of the Eastern Shore, a volunteer with the Maryland Chapter of Moms Demand Action, and a parent. I am submitting this testimony in SUPPORT of HB416.

Parents, students, educators, and medical professionals have raised many concerns about the impact that active shooter drills can have on student development, including the risk for depression and anxiety and the risk for lasting symptoms. The American Psychiatric Association, the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers, have all declared active shooter drills are a detrimental and unproven school safety tactic. Accordingly, schools must be mindful of the impact of active shooter drills that involve students and take that into consideration when designing such programs and determining whether to even include students.

For states and districts that have a mandate to conduct active shooter drills the American Psychiatric Association, the NEA, and the AFT recommend avoiding drills simulating actual incidents, notifying parents, students, and teachers in advance of planned drills, creating age and developmentally appropriate content in conjunction with teachers and school-based mental health specialists, and combining drills with support systems to address student well-being.

HB416, sponsored by Delegate Jared Solomon will help to remediate the trauma of active shooter drills by requiring advanced notification of the drills, preventing realistic simulations, and providing adequate support services before and after drills in alignment with recognized best practices. The bill would also require the development and distribution to parents and guardians of information on Maryland's safe storage of firearms laws.

Some of the most frequently challenged and controversial texts help learners get a better idea of the world, their place in it, understand different dangers, and the importance of having agency over oneself and their choices. Every child needs accurate, factual, and realistic exposure to people's experiences with sex, sexuality and relationships in order to understand what is healthy and in order to give people the knowledge and language to use to speak up in the unfortunate chance that they are dealing with sexual abuse. Further, not all parents have the willingness or knowledge to have important conversations with their children about their sexual health. In these cases, children often turn to information they find in the classroom and school library, as well as to trusted teachers, counselors, and

other educational professionals. Thus, it is important that such educational materials be available to students where they're best able to access it.

Emboldening people with the opportunity to object to curriculum and ban materials, including books, readings, workbooks, worksheets, handouts, and digital media based on beliefs about morality, religion, personal philosophy, or political ideology is dangerous and only promotes tunnel vision. Accordingly, Salisbury PFLAG opposes this bill and recommends an UNFAVORABLE report in committee.