

Testimony in Favorable with Amendments House Bill 505 Public and Nonpublic Schools Student School Transfers Academic Records Documentation

Good afternoon Chair and members of the Committee. My name is The Honorable Dr. Cashenna A. Cross. I appear before you in my capacity as a municipal leader, United States Air Force veteran, educator, and longtime advocate for children and families across Maryland. My professional life has centered on education, leadership development, and removing barriers that prevent young people from reaching stability and opportunity. I offer testimony in Favorable with Amendments for House Bill 505.

House Bill 505 addresses a quiet but serious problem that impacts students at vulnerable moments in their lives. When a student transfers schools during conflict between families and institutions, the child often becomes the one who pays the price. Delayed records mean delayed enrollment, lost instructional time, and unnecessary disruption to academic progress. For many families, especially those navigating financial hardship, relocation, military transition, or family instability, time matters. Education cannot pause while adults resolve disputes.

Maryland already recognizes this principle for military connected students through existing interstate agreements. Extending similar flexibility to other students reflects fairness and consistency in policy. A child should never be locked out of learning because paperwork is withheld. Accepting unofficial academic records for enrollment purposes protects continuity while still allowing verification later.

Throughout my career training thousands of leaders and working directly with youth and families, I have seen how quickly students fall behind when systems move slowly. Enrollment delays can contribute to disengagement, behavioral challenges, and long term academic loss. This bill places the focus where it belongs on the student rather than the dispute.

Recommended Amendments

- Clarify that acceptance of unofficial records is solely for enrollment and placement pending verification.
- Require receiving schools to request official records within a defined timeframe to maintain accountability.
- Provide guidance ensuring protection of special education and accommodation documentation so services are not interrupted.
- Encourage mediation pathways between sending schools and families so financial disputes are resolved without impacting students.

With these amendments, House Bill 505 strengthens educational access while preserving institutional integrity. This measure ensures that children remain the priority in moments of transition. Maryland has long led in education policy, and this bill continues that tradition by placing learning ahead of conflict. For these reasons, I respectfully request a Favorable with Amendments report on House Bill 505.

Respectfully submitted, The Honorable Dr. Cashenna A. Cross Councilwoman at Large, City of Glenarden United States Air Force Veteran Municipal Advocate for Children and Families
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