



**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate
Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 26, 2020**

**Board of Education
of Howard County**

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SB0903: SUPPORT

Immigration Enforcement - Public Schools, Hospitals, and Courthouses - Policies

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **SB0903 Immigration Enforcement - Public Schools, Hospitals, and Courthouses - Policies** in alignment with the Howard County Public School System's (HCPSS) commitment to maintaining a culture that recognizes the worth and dignity of each individual on their journey to academic achievement. While the Board's legislative platform compels the need to maintain local authority to set policies, we support the intent of this bill as guidance and affirmation of the importance of creating a safe learning environment for all students.

In 2017, the Board issued a Safe School Zones resolution that proclaimed "schools are sensitive locations where immigration enforcement action should not occur and urges in the strongest terms possible that the federal government honor that directive" and further resolved "that the Superintendent develop a new, comprehensive policy consistent with this Resolution that recognizes HCPSS schools as 'safe zones' that lawfully safeguard the privacy, safety, educational climate, and emotional health of our foreign born students." HCPSS Policy 1070 - Protections and Supports for Foreign-Born Students and Families was approved by the Board in October 2018 and became effective July 1, 2019.

This policy, similar to that authorized under SB0903, specifically states "unless federal, state, or local law mandates otherwise, immigration enforcement actions may not occur on any property owned or leased by the HCPSS." Maryland's recognition that foreign-born students may face unique circumstances impacting their safety and learning environment unless appropriate safeguards are taken will be reiterated through the enactment of this bill.

The Board believes that an environment of mutual respect and civil conduct between and among students, school system employees, parents, volunteers, and the general public is critical to the achievement of students and staff.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report of SB0903 from this Committee.