



HB535 ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS - PREVENTIVE MEASURE UNIT PILOT PROGRAM

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ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY DELEGATION

OPPOSE

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) opposes **HB535 Anne Arundel County Public Schools - Preventive Measure Unit Pilot Program**. This bill establishes the Preventive Measure Unit Pilot Program in Anne Arundel County. It requires the Board of Education, in collaboration with the County Police Department and the County Mental Health Agency, to establish a preventive measure unit position in three middle schools to monitor students with behavioral, social, or legal difficulties. The bill also provides for unspecified funding.

While well-intentioned, this legislation would result in an unfunded mandate that encroaches on local board authority and local school system decision-making.

The legislation would require AACPS to work with the County Police Department and the County Mental Health Agency. However, AACPS already has a very collaborative relationship with both agencies and this relationship does not need to be legislated.

AACPS has several concerns with the proposed legislation. First, the intent of the legislation is unclear. HB535 would establish a “Preventive Measure Unit Pilot Program” but it does not specify what the Program would seek to prevent. Another concern with the legislation is the requirement that the school district hire a staff person for each of the three participating middle schools. The type of position to be hired is not identified in the bill. Due to the lack of specification in the bill and what it aims to prevent, it is difficult to determine what staff would need to be hired. For example, would AACPS need to hire addiction specialists, psychologists, or counselors? This is unclear.

The funding, or lack thereof, for the three positions is also concerning. While the legislation would require the Governor to appropriate funding for the Program, it does not specify the amount of funding. Because we do not know what the Program is seeking to prevent, it is difficult to quantify what that funding would have to be in order to hire the appropriate staff. There is also concern that the positions created have the potential of being permanent and this would result in the costs being absorbed by AACPS once the original funding was no longer available.

Finally, in 2018, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Maryland Safe to Learn Act. That law addresses several school safety issues, including safety evaluations and behavior threat assessments, staff training, and school policy on behavior threat assessments. AACPS supported that legislation and played an integral role in the development of the law. In fact, Superintendent George Arlotto and AACPS staff were part of the group that recently developed the State model policy for behavior threat assessment, which school systems must adopt. The 2018 law in conjunction with current AACPS programs could result in a lot of potential overlap depending on the ultimate purpose of this Program. For example, AACPS has already implemented positive behavioral interventions and supports, and restorative practices in our schools. These programs help to improve student behaviors and achievement for all students by establishing a consistent approach to managing behavior and encouraging clear and positive behavioral expectations.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB535.