



PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
BOARD OF EDUCATION
14201 School Lane, Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

Title: Education - Child Abuse and Sexual Misconduct Prevention - Hiring Emergent Employees
Bill Number: HB 1008 **Position: Support with amendment**
Hearing Date: February 26, 2020
Committee: House Ways and Means Committee
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The Prince George's County Board of Education supports with amendment House Bill 1008, which includes provisions authorizing a local board of education to hire an applicant as an emergent employee for up to 60 days pending a review of the employment history; altering the definition of "direct contact with minors"; and authorizing a local board to share an applicant's employment history record with other local boards.

The Board of Education takes seriously its legal and moral duty to provide a safe educational environment for the over 136,000 students and 20,000 staff who work on their behalf in our school system. Towards that end, the Board appreciates the heightened standard under Maryland law that leads school systems to review and revise longstanding practices and procedures in the hiring, supervision, discipline and discharge of school employees for misconduct.

In 2019, the General Assembly passed HB 486 to establish a more extensive process for determining whether an applicant for employment with a local school system has ever been disciplined for allegations of "child sexual abuse" or "sexual misconduct." The process led to the creation of "486 Forms" to capture all prior employment potentially involving direct access to minors and allegations of misconduct. Since July 1, 2019, PGCPS has sent the 486 Forms to over 5,500 previous employers, and has received over 550 requests to complete 486 Forms for former PGCPS employees.

Our staff has encountered several implementation challenges, particularly with receiving timely responses on the forms from prior employers. This has caused significant delays in placing the applicants in positions that need to be filled as soon as possible, especially in classrooms throughout the school year. We have needed to hire three additional staff, and plan to hire at least one more, to assist with the workload and documentation required to fully comply with the new law.

HB 1008 would help to alleviate some of these challenges by allowing us to place emergent employees in positions - with proper supervision - while awaiting completed 486 Forms from prior employers. In addition, the provision that allows county boards of education to share 486 Form results regarding the

same applicants will greatly reduce delays in placing qualified staff in positions sooner, as movement between school systems is common.

However, we respectfully request consideration of additional amendments to the bill that will further assist school systems with implementing the law as intended. The requested amendments are: (1) a definition of “routine interaction with a minor”, which would help to clarify the former positions that an applicant should include on the 486 Form; (2) a requirement that 486 Forms be returned within 20 business days, not calendar days, which provides additional time for school system staff to return forms for prior employees; and (3) consideration of allowing an emergent employee to be in position for up to 90 days, instead of 60 days, since it may take multiple attempts to contact prior employers and receive completed 486 Forms.

With these amendments, we urge a favorable report for House Bill 1008. Thank you for your consideration.