

# EQUITY FOR ALL KIDS



To: Chair Kaiser and members of the Ways and Means Committee  
From: Shamoyia Gardiner, Education Policy Director  
Re: House Bill 1421: Education – Advanced Courses – Automatic Enrollment  
Date: March 4, 2020  
Position: Support

Nationally, quantitative data tell a consistent story: students of color, particularly Black and Latino students, are enrolled in advanced courses at disproportionately lower rates than their White and Asian peers—even when all students perform at the same high academic level.<sup>1</sup> The implications of this data are clear: these inequitable placements must be caused by the advanced course placement process.

Though Maryland does not currently produce the state-level data to demonstrate adherence to the national trend, taking the state's largest school system (Montgomery County Public Schools) as a sample yields a similar tale of inequity. The **implicit biases** that exist in the minds and actions of school-based decision makers **are directly responsible for the poorer-quality educational experiences and disparate outcomes felt by students of color** across the state.

Federal Way Public Schools in Washington State created a national model in 2010 when they implemented a policy similar to HB 1421—and saw a significant increase in both overall enrollment and that of students of color. As of 2019, the district's overall advanced course passage rate is 92%, with no racial group passing at a rate lower than 87%.<sup>2</sup> In 2013, when Tacoma Public Schools followed suit, overall enrollment in advanced courses increased while **enrollment of students of color tripled**.<sup>3</sup>

Maryland is about to make an investment in its students, schools, communities, and collective future—the legislative proposal at hand will only serve to strengthen the structures responsible for producing improved outcomes from that investment, while immediately increasing the quality of education available to students across the state.

HB 1421 is the exact type of intelligent, cost-effective, universalist policy-making that can create more equitable systems by making subtle adjustments. The bill will also encourage more complete data availability to assist in future assessments of how we can create the conditions for schools to better serve students. **ACY strongly urges a favorable report on this bill.**

<sup>1</sup> The Education Trust. *Inequities in Advanced Coursework: What's Driving Them and What Leaders Can Do*. January 9, 2020

<sup>2</sup> Stand for Children. *First-in-Nation Law to Reduce Barriers to Advanced Classes for All Students Adopted in Washington State*. May 7, 2019. <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2019/05/07/1818737/0/en/FIRST-IN-NATION-LAW-TO-REDUCE-BARRIERS-TO-ADVANCED-CLASSES-FOR-ALL-STUDENTS-ADOPTED-IN-WASHINGTON-STATE.html?print=1>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid