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Ways and Means Committee

Education Subcommittee

Election Law Subcommittee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Delegate Alice Cain
Before the Ways and Means Committee**

**In Support of HB1421
Education—Advanced Courses—Automatic Enrollment**

March 4, 2020

1:00pm

Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about a bill to address the problem of inequitable access to advanced coursework.

Maryland is one of the worst states in the US in providing Black and Latino students with access to advanced courses. In fact, Maryland ranked 33rd out of the 48 states measured.¹

Black students make up 30% of Maryland students, but only 14% of Maryland Advanced Placement test takers.² Nationally, 24% of high school graduates passed an AP exam last year.³ AP provides college level curriculum to high school students. It allows them to earn college credit while in high school if they pass an exam showing they mastered the material.

This bill would help close the opportunity gap by automatically enrolling any student in advanced courses who:

- Exceeds grade level standards on the Maryland School Assessment
- Reaches college and career readiness benchmarks on standardized tests
- Is identified as Gifted and Talented through universal screening

The legislation sets the standard at automatic enrollment so that students and families must opt-out, rather than opt-in, which is the current practice. This ensures that all students get

¹ Ed Trust, *Inequities in Opportunity and Achievement in Maryland*

² Harvard Political Review

<https://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/best-isnt-good-enough-racial-representation-gap-education/>

³

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/dc-students-made-some-of-the-nations-biggest-improvements-on-ap-exams/2020/03/03/a29b153c-5a43-11ea-9000-f3cffee23036_story.html

access to rigorous coursework that can open the doors to and help them to succeed in college and their career.

In an effort to improve access and opportunity to rigorous coursework, the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* in some cases covers the cost of Advanced Placement tests, but students must be enrolled in those courses for this goal to be met.

This bill is supported by more than two dozen organizations across the state including

- ACLU
- Advocates for Children and Youth
- Baltimore Corps
- Baltimoreans for Educational Equity
- Black and Brown Coalition for Educational Equity and Excellence
- Business Leaders for Education in Maryland
- Casa de Maryland
- Caucus of African American Leaders
- Education Trust
- Family League of Baltimore
- Greater Baltimore Urban League
- NAACP
- Prince George's County Advocates for Better Schools
- Urban Teachers

Lastly, just this morning, there was an article in the Washington Post about DCPS' efforts to double the number of students who passed an AP exam. A principal quoted in the article says it well: "We have really viewed AP courses as part of an equity strategy. The entire staff knows that AP is one of the key mechanisms that we need to use to advance student learning."⁴

This is a necessary step to improve equity and ensure fair access to all students.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on this bill.