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Baltimore County

Ways and Means Committee

Education Subcommittee

Finance Resources Subcommittee



The Maryland House of Delegates  
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**April 1, 2021**

**Support HB418 – County Boards of Education – Symbols of Hate – Policy**

Dear Mr. Chair and Members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee,

I respectfully ask for your favorable support of HB 418 designed to ban hate symbols from Maryland Public Schools unless the symbol is necessary for educational programming.

The educational experiences of our diverse student body should not be marred by racist hate symbols from the past such as Confederate flags, nooses and swastikas. Allowing students or others to wear or display these symbols on school property or at school sponsored events is offensive and disruptive to the learning environment.

While I respect the First Amendment and the right to free speech, there is simply no place for the Confederate flag and other hate symbols in public schools as determined by the 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court which includes Maryland. In addition, there is no reasonable expectation of absolute freedom of speech in a school environment. In Maryland, all 24 jurisdictions have dress code restrictions and eight jurisdictions including Carroll, Caroline, Howard, Montgomery (adopted last month) St. Mary's, Talbot, Wicomico and Baltimore County (adopted in January for the 2021 school year) specifically ban one or more of these symbols in their dress code currently.

One of the first steps in true educational equity is to make sure that everyone feels safe in the school environment. I strongly urge you to explicitly ban wearing or displaying divisive and triggering symbols of hate that disrupt and interfere with the teacher's ability to teach and the student's ability to learn by supporting HB 418.

Sincerely,  
Delegate Michele Guyton