

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Testimony of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners Support with Amendment House Bill 400 – Public Schools Enrollment Location Continuity

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The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports the effort of the sponsor for trying to rid barriers for students that find themselves in state custody. This bill would prohibit the withdrawal of a student from enrollment in a school that the student is attending until after the disposition of the student's juvenile case.

The practice that local school systems follow when a student is taken into the custody of a juvenile center is for the student's education record to be transferred to the juvenile center. Currently, transferring records has been defined as removing a student from the local school system's enrollment. The issue that the legislation is trying to resolve appears to be one that will allow students, when released, to immediately attend the school in which s/he attended prior to the stay at the state facility and while in the state facility the student can continue to receive appropriate education. The school board agrees that there should be no delay in the education of students and believes this will alleviate some of that delay.

However, there is a concern because a student that stays enrolled in a school, but does not attend class, is marked absent. In many cases, the number of days absent would currently reflect as the student being chronically absent, which would not only impact the absenteeism rate at the school, but also have the school's attendance rate be reflected poorly on the Maryland School Report Card.

In order for this legislation to not penalize schools, COMAR and the Maryland Records Manual/COMAR 13A.08.07.03 would need to be changed to reflect a specific code that these students can be given so as not to penalize the school or school system. Additionally, school systems would need to modify its current computer system (in Baltimore City it is Infinite Campus) to address the changes that will be made to allow for the new coding of these "absent" students. COMAR 13A.08.07.03 <http://www.dsd.state.md.us/comar/comarhtml/13a/13a.08.07.03.htm> Manual <http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/OCP/Publications/MDStudentRecordsSystemManual2016.pdf>

Basically, we hope that when regulations are developed to implement this legislation should it become law, local boards are asked to be part of the development of the regulations so that issues such as the above can be worked out and time parameters for the transfer of documents and notification processes when students are placed/removed from custody can be developed.

For the foregoing reasons the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports with amendments HB 400 and urges a favorable report.

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