

LAUREN ARIKAN
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DEPUTY MINORITY WHIP

Judiciary Committee



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The Maryland House of Delegates
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 939.

Chairman Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington and my friends of the Ways and Means Committee,

I urge a FAVORABLE REPORT on House Bill 939. This bill seeks to create a program that will allow students in districts that fail to fully re-open by Fall of 2021 to take their state portion of the per pupil funding and use it at the private or parochial school of their parent's choice.

Our most vulnerable students have been gravely impacted by the failure of our counties schools to fully re-open. For many Maryland students, particularly those who are vulnerable and in high needs situations, we have utterly failed them. Our constitutional mandate is that we provide children with a free and appropriate public education, but for so many students, virtual learning is simply not learning at all.

In fact, many students who are registered currently haven't logged in a single time. Who is following these students? Are they even safe? For some students in our state school is their only refuge, it is the only place where they are fed or can see a nurse when they don't feel well. We, as a legislature, have the power to open the doors of our schools. What good will Kirwan funding do for our most vulnerable if they cannot even step foot inside the building?

I urge the committee to dig deep in their hearts and take this step to rectifying a great wrong in our state. Certainly it is possible to find "research" on both sides of this issue. But we as a state need only look to our neighbors to the North. Just ten minutes over the PA line students have been back to school full time and in full time sports for months. I know this because I have watched my friends that live over the line on Facebook and Instagram posting pictures of their children standing with their teams, next to their teachers and earning awards.

This epidemic doesn't understand state lines. If it has been working in Pennsylvania, it will work in Maryland. We should not continue to delude ourselves at the expense of those who can least afford it.

Thank you all for your time and I strongly urge a FAVORABLE REPORT on HB 939. Let's get our kids back to school!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lauren C. Arikan".

Lauren C. Arikan

Delegate, District 7