

SUPPORT HB 939

Good afternoon Madame Chairwoman Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and Committee members,
Thank you for allowing me to testify today.

I am a parent of 3 current Baltimore County Public School Students who have been participating in virtual learning since March 13, 2020.

Our schools closed in March for 2 weeks that then turned into 3 months due to this new virus. I was hopeful as the summer break began; the upcoming school year would bring back some form of normalcy.

Despite a survey taken over the summer with results showing the majority of parents, students, and staff preferred hybrid or in-person learning for the fall, BCPS remained virtual.

Despite acceptable metrics for almost 2 months in the fall, BCPS remained virtual.

Despite the federal government, the state government and the CDC recommendations in late summer to open schools, BCPS remained virtual.

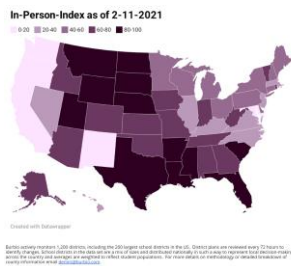
Despite data from schools around our county, our state and the country showing how to safely reopen schools, BCPS remained virtual.

Despite over \$60 million in aid from the federal, state and local governments and over 10 months to prepare schools, BCPS has remained virtual.

And now with the release of the new CDC guidelines, not mandates, it seems unlikely that public schools will be willing to open for more than hybrid anytime soon. My 3 children are in phase 4 of BCPS return to school plan with 85,000 other students and will not have the opportunity to return until April 6th. My children will have the opportunity for 24 in-person school days total for this academic year. This is woefully inadequate.

I recognize that BCPS and many other county schools in Maryland are large and diverse. I recognize that some Maryland public school systems had health and safety issues before the pandemic. I also recognize that larger public-school systems with similar conditions have moved to open for students this academic year, so it is possible to safely do so with the time and money provided to the county schools in Maryland.

It is becoming very clear that our students are at a great disadvantage compared to students around the country who have been in school, some for 5 days a week, since August. Maryland is an outlier as clearly seen on this map. We are 1 of 5 states where less than 20 of our districts are open to in-person learning.



[K-12 School Opening Tracker \(burbio.com\)](https://burbio.com)

The virtual learning platform currently being used by BCPS is not a long-term equivalent or substitution to in-person learning. Young children are subjected to hours of screen time over what any pediatrician would recommend. Many secondary students are struggling with feelings of isolation and anxiety. The instructional time for content classes (math, science, social studies, English/language arts) is much less per week compared to a normal school year and therefore students are quickly falling behind. Virtual learning does not adequately provide the academic, social, and emotional growth our students need.

I want our community schools to be strong and successful. I want our staff and students to thrive.

If the public schools in Maryland do not fully open in the Fall of 2021, all families should receive the support needed to make an appropriate educational choice for their children. I fully support this bill that provides families with some assistance to choose an in-person educational option.

Thank you very much for reading my testimony today and I urge you to support this legislation.

Sincerely,

Amy Adams

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