



P.O. Box 5200
Salisbury, MD 21801

March 7, 2022

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
Maryland General Assembly
Legislative Services Building
90 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony on Senate Bill 786

Dear Legislators:

The Delmarva Parent Teacher Coalition represents parents, students, teachers, and taxpayers in numerous counties across Maryland. Like many parents, I have experienced firsthand the obstructive tactics used by the school system to prevent school transparency, and their efforts to conceal what's being taught in each grade. The school system plays all sorts of games, finger points to the MSDE, misinforms, and sends parents into an infinite circle of no end. Historically, it has been so bad that a parent has to file a FOIA or MPIA request to find out what's being taught in their child's school. Upon receipt of a request, it is not uncommon to receive a response such as "no such document exists" to only learn that such documents in fact do exist. It is also common for a parent to be met with a \$40,000+ quote to produce the curriculum. The State of Maryland's Ombudsman is another obstacle that plays a useless role in the state. The State's Ombudsman cannot compel a school system to produce what has been withheld and cannot assess a penalty for noncompliance.

After walking through repeated revolving doors designed to deter a parent from continuing their request for information, the last resort is for a parent to file an appeal to the local board. By default, the board will unleash their attorney to respond to the parent as an attempt to intimidate. Some board members never even see some of the appeals that are filed. Administration interferes with this process, creating a wedge between the schoolboard, and the citizens that elected them. There are no procedures or policies for this practice, because they are internal tactics designed to obstruct and abuse citizens. In addition, parents that request information or question officials are bullied by the school system, contrary to their very own anti-bullying and whistleblower policies. Lastly, students face retribution by administration and faculty as they seek vengeance upon the parents who simply asked. Ironically, each school system receives funding specifically for parent involvement in education. Instead, these funds have been used to obstruct parent involvement in opposition of the intended purpose. This is nothing more than an illusion of justice.

Why would this be, and why do I bring this all up? It's all relative to SB786 and why this bill is so important. A parent and taxpayer have every right to know what's being taught in their public schools. They should be able to find out without having to file a FOIA or MPIA. Each school system staffs a Director of Curriculum, including curriculum assistants. It's their job to implement a school's orderly

curriculum, so the work is already done for the school year in advance. Therefore, there's no reinventing the wheel, and there's no heavy burden on staff or administration. All they have to do is simply print each grade-specific curriculum to PDF and post to their school system's website. It could be done in very little time. As an IT professional and web developer of over 30 years, I can attest that this is a very simple task. If each school's Director of Curriculum is unable to do this, then I would question the six-figure income that they receive while having nothing to show for it.

In conclusion, I fully support SB786 in its entirety. I am respectfully asking our legislators to support and pass this bipartisan bill in its current form, as it's in the best interest of our citizens. There's every good reason to pass it, and no good reason not to.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "DL", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Darren Lombardo, Representative
Delmarva Parent Teacher Coalition