



SB362 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION - VIRTUAL SCHOOLS – REVISIONS

March 31, 2022

WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Jeanette Ortiz, Esq., Legislative & Policy Counsel (410.703.5352)

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) is submitting a letter of information on **SB362 Primary and Secondary Education - Virtual Schools - Revisions**.

AACPS appreciates the bill's intent to expand virtual learning opportunities for Maryland students. It is, however, important to note that local school systems are already fully authorized to provide appropriate virtual learning opportunities under existing law. AACPS initiated the Virtual Academy this school year. In fact, the Virtual Academy has been showcased by MSDE due to its rigorous and purposeful structures, schedules, and organization. MSDE has also highlighted the district's hiring practices and professional learning opportunities.

AACPS appreciates the many clarifying amendments made to the bill concerning nonprofit and for profit entities, requirements regarding extracurricular activities, return to in-person learning, and class sizes. However, has concerns about the ability to fully implement the amended language in Section 7-1404(a)(40(ii) of the legislation which would require a virtual school to offer enrolled students access to athletics and athletic teams at the school the student would have otherwise attended if not enrolled in the virtual school. The district recommends that the language in Section 7-1404(a)(40(ii) be replaced with the following language:

TO THE EXTENT PRACTICABLE, ATHLETICS AND ATHLETICS TEAMS AT THE PUBLIC SCHOOL THE STUDENT WOULD OTHERWISE BE REQUIRED TO ATTEND

AACPS remains committed to elevating all students and eliminating all gaps. The district recognizes the educational benefits of a diverse workforce that enriches the education experience of all AACPS students. The district can accomplish this by investing in the development of highly effective teachers and leaders that reflect our diversity and commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and a high-quality education for all AACPS students. AACPS recognizes individuals who use student data, reflect on their practice, and engage in professional learning as highly effective educators. Such educators enhance their knowledge and skills to increase student learning in their classrooms, at their schools, and in our school district. AACPS believes that the quality of education is directly dependent on the quality of the teacher workforce, which is directly impacted by the school system's ability to recruit and retain high-quality educators.

Thank you for consideration of this information regarding SB362.