

SB0629 Annapolis Pride.pdf

Uploaded by: Jaden Farris

Position: FAV



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February 24, 2023

SB0629 - Primary and Secondary Education - Policies on Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation - Revisions

Position: FAVORABLE

Annapolis Pride's mission is to advocate for, empower, and celebrate our LGBTQ+ community in Anne Arundel County to live fully and authentically. Our vision is a safe, equitable, and anti-racist community where people of all identities thrive.

As such, the Board of Directors of Annapolis Pride enthusiastically supports Senate Bill 629, which provides more comprehensive protections for students who experience bullying, harassment, or intimidation. By allowing victim's to make the decision of notifying their parents or guardians in situations of bullying or harassment, we ensure that victims are given full autonomy of their own safety and wellbeing. This policy will ensure that victims are not ashamed or blamed for the actions of their perpetrators.

Schools are considered a safe space for many students, as such schools should not release information regarding a student's sexual orientation, gender identity, etc. to their parents unless the student has explicitly requested that their parents be informed. By taking steps to protect student's privacy rights, schools can create a safe, supportive environment where students can feel comfortable exploring their identity without fear of judgment or discrimination.

For these reasons, Annapolis Pride respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 629.

SB629_2.23.23.pdf

Uploaded by: Reese Beyers

Position: FAV



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The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary
House of Delegates Ways and Means Committee
Room 131
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

February 22nd, 2022

**Testimony of FreeState Justice
IN SUPPORT OF SB 629 - Primary and Secondary Education - Policies on Bullying,
Harassment, or Intimidation - Revisions**

To the Honorable Chair Brian Feldman and esteemed members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

FreeState Justice is Maryland's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) civil rights advocacy organization. Each year, we provide free legal services to dozens, if not hundreds, of LGBTQ+ Marylanders who could not otherwise be able to afford an attorney, as well as advocate more broadly on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community.

We write today in strong support of House Bill 576, which would drastically improve the present policies on bullying, harassment, or intimidation for LGBTQ+ students in Maryland schools. As the current policy stands now, even the most well-meaning teachers, staff, and administrators may place an already vulnerable child in avoidable harm by reporting an instance of anti-LGBTQ+ bullying without their consent.

At its core, **the present model policy on bullying infringes upon LGBTQ+ students' privacy and autonomy**. Adolescence is a time filled with formative experiences and identity exploration. Before coming out, young people may struggle to understand or come to terms with their own identity. Youth consistently cite coming out (i.e., disclosing one's sexual or gender identity) to their parents as one of the most fear inducing steps in the coming out process, as many LGBTQ+ youth dread parental rejection or disapproval (Willoughby et al., 2006). The decision to come out is a deeply personal one, and it is **violating** to have that decision made for a child, **especially after being bullied**.

Anti-LGBTQ+ bullying is a public health crisis in America. In Maryland public schools, **more than half** of LGBTQ+ students report experiencing harassment or assault based on their identity (GLSEN, 2019). The consequences of anti-LGBTQ+ bullying are alarming: LGBTQ+ students

are more likely to skip school to avoid victimization, have lower GPAs, and experience poorer physical and mental health outcomes compared to their non-LGBTQ+ peers (CDC, 2019).

One recent report by the Trevor Project (2022), a national LGBTQ crisis intervention and suicide prevention service for youth, **found that 68% of Maryland's LGBTQ youth reported experiencing symptoms of anxiety and 53% had symptoms of depression.** Even more disturbing, **43% of LGBTQ+ youth seriously considered suicide in the past year.** Taken together, these statistics demonstrate the urgent need for policy interventions that help LGBTQ+ youth feel safe and supported should they be victims of harassment, bullying, or intimidation on the basis of their identities.

On top of the psychological and social consequences of anti-LGBTQ+ bullying, LGBTQ+ youth who are victims of bullying may be placed in an even more dangerous situation by school personnel: being unintentionally “outed” to their parents. When schools report incidents of anti-LGBTQ+ bullying to parents, it is critical to consider how this may affect the student’s safety at home. **Only 1 in 3 LGBTQ+ youth found their home to be LGBTQ+-affirming** in recent years (The Trevor Project, 202) and **are significantly more vulnerable to childhood mistreatment** as a result (Robers et al., 2012).

Hostile home environments and family rejection also place LGBTQ+ youth at an increased risk of being placed in the child welfare system. Not only are LGBTQ+ youth overrepresented in the foster care system (Wilson & Kastanis, 2015), but they also represent 40% of the homeless population (Durso & Gates, 2012)). Without the passing of SB 629, **teachers who are simply following a well-intended model policy are placing LGBTQ+ students in avoidable harm.**

Many other states already have distinct protections for LGBTQ+ youth should they experience bullying. The benefits of LGBTQ+-specific policies are clear: LGBTQ+ youth feel safer in school, more connected to their peers, and experience better psychosocial outcomes. These policies can also help youth connect with resources that negate the harm that they experience following peer victimization and bullying. Through this, students gain the skills necessary to cope with identity based discrimination, both inside and outside of schools.

The benefits of LGBTQ+-specific policies are not only experienced by LGBTQ+ youth themselves. **Non-LGBTQ+ students also report feeling more included and having better peer relationships if their school has LGBTQ+-specific bullying protections in place.** Teachers feel better equipped to intervene in instances of anti-LGBTQ+ bullying or harassment. Most importantly, SB 629 would help school personnel avoid being placed in the uncomfortable position of unintentionally outing a child to their parents.

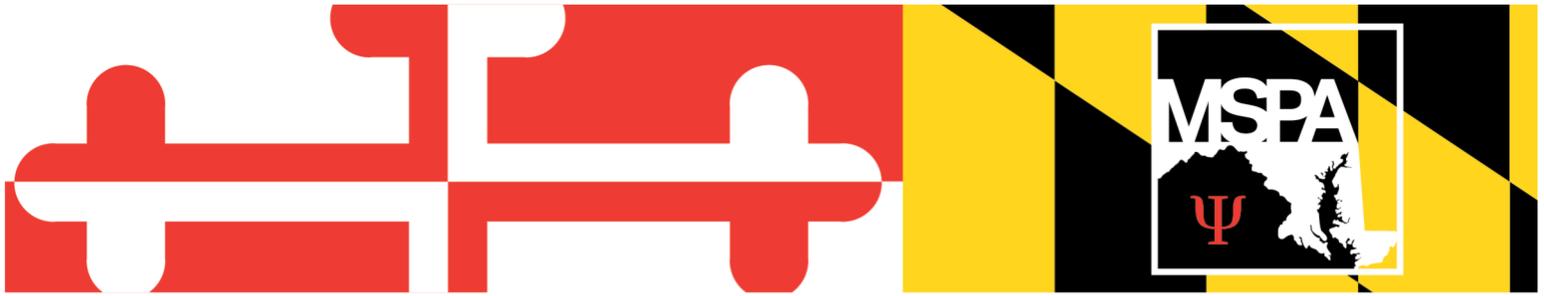
Simply put: providing LGBTQ+ youth with the opportunity to decide how they would like their parents involved after they experience anti-LGBTQ bullying or harassment is **lifesaving**. When a student experiences bullying, they should not further fear how their school will *help* them. As adults, we should be doing everything in our power to ensure all students attend schools where they feel safe to learn and thrive.

For these reasons, FreeState Justice urges a favorable report on SB 629.

Sb 629 MSPA Letter.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Peters

Position: FAV



February 23, 2023

Bill: Senate Bill 629 – Primary and Secondary Education - Policies on Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation - Revisions

Position: Support

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA), a professional organization representing about 500 school psychologists in Maryland. We advocate for the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic wellbeing of students and families across the state.

We support Senate Bill 576 which would revise the state of Maryland's model policy for bullying, harassment, and intimidation to protect students with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. Specifically, the bill would revise the policy to protect the alleged victim by allowing the victim to determine if their parents should be notified if the bullying, harassment, and/or intimidation is related to the victim's sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. This would reduce the likelihood that the student may face retaliation or negative consequences for their expression of their sexual orientation or gender identity in the home environment.

School psychologists are “ethically obligated to ensure that all youth with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and/or gender expressions are able to develop and express their personal identities in a school climate that is safe, accepting, and respectful of all persons and free from discrimination, harassment, violence, and abuse.”¹ At home, LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to experience “family rejection, which may include abuse, exclusion, being forced to leave home, and efforts to change a youth's sexual orientation or gender identity.”¹ SB 629 would protect a vulnerable student population from negative consequences and fear of retaliation for reporting instances of bullying, harassment, and intimidation. All students must feel safe at school to learn, and SB 629 could increase the positive outcomes of students with diverse gender identity and sexual orientation.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB 629. If we can provide any further information or be of assistance, please contact us at legislative@mspaonline.org or Sarah Peters at speters@hbstrategies.us or 410-322-2320.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Phipps, M.Ed., Ed.S., NCSP
Committee Chair, Legislative Committee
Maryland School Psychologists' Association.

1. [National Association of School Psychologists Position Statement: Safe and Supportive Schools for LGBTQ+ Youth](#)

HB0576 SB0629 Policies on Bullying, Harassment or

Uploaded by: Sandy Gold Raynes

Position: FWA

Bill: **HB0576 / SB0629 Primary and Secondary Education - Policies on Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation - Revisions**

Organization: GLSEN Maryland, chapter@md.glsen.org

Submitted by: Sandy Gold Raynes, Board Member

Position: **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

I am submitting this testimony in **FAVOR WITH AMENDMENTS** of **HB0576 / SB0629 Primary and Secondary Education - Policies on Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation - Revisions** on behalf of GLSEN Maryland, the statewide chapter of GLSEN National, a nonprofit organization centered on creating and sustaining inclusive K-12 education for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) students.

Research by GLSEN National (2021) finds that **LGBTQ+ students experience high rates of bullying, harassment, and intimidation**, with almost 82% reporting feeling unsafe at school. **LGBTQ+ students of color are most likely to experience bullying, harassment, and intimidation** at school.

Experiencing a hostile school climate is associated with greater rates of absenteeism, lower GPA, lower graduation rates, and being less likely to go on to college (GLSEN, 2021). Thus, **it is in the best interest of students and our broader community to create supportive school climates for LGBTQ+ youth.**

GLSEN Maryland supports the bill modifications which allows students experiencing bullying, harassment or intimidation on the basis of perceived sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity to have the *option* of notifying their parents/guardians. Many LGBTQ+ children lack supportive home environments and may remain closeted at home; for these students, notifying families of bullying, harassment, or intimidation on the basis of a perceived LGBTQ+ identity can lead to a home environment which is abusive, hostile, or which increases youth homelessness. **It is in students' best interest to leave the decision to notify parents/guardians of harassment on the basis of perceived sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity at their discretion.**

In contrast to stereotypes, research finds bullying is better characterized as cyclical patterns of relational violence in which many students are both bullies *and* victims of bullying; about **50% of youth who bully report also being victims** of bullying (Haynie et al., 2001). And, up to 80% of youth participate in bullying behavior as a bystander (Salmivalli et al., 1996).

Strong disciplinary policies, such as “zero-tolerance” policies, are not effective at curbing bullying (Borgwald & Theixos, 2013). This is because bullying is cyclical, and most students are hesitant to report someone and ‘get them in trouble.’ Disciplinary anti-bullying policies create perceptions that the school climate is unsupportive of students.

LGBTQ+ youth of color experience disproportionate school “push-out” due to harsh disciplinary policies (Brudge et al., 2021). Disciplinary school policies can work to turn students away from education

and onto a pathway towards juvenile detention (the school to prison pipeline). Disciplinary policies are disproportionately applied across youth, with LGBTQ+ youth of color being most subjected to school to prison pipeline experiences (Brudge et al., 2021). LGBTQ+ youth of color report experiences in schools of increased surveillance and of being blamed for their own victimization (Brudge et al., 2021).

In contrast, **schools experience less bullying when they work to foster a supportive, caring environment** in which students and teachers have meaningful, trusting relationships with one another (Konold et al., 2014; Thornberg, Wänström, & Pozzoli, 2017). **Restorative justice practices** which focus on healing and reconciliation with a victim, are effective at reducing bullying, particularly among school-aged juvenile populations (Palermo, 2013).

Given this, GLSEN Maryland is in favor of HB0576 / SB0629 but requests **amendments requiring restorative justice processes in response to incidents of bullying, harassment, and intimidation.**

SB 629_ Primary and Secondary Education - Policies

Uploaded by: Alexa Thomas

Position: UNF



PSSAM
Public School Superintendents' Association
OF MARYLAND

Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director
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BILL: SB 629

TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education - Policies on Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation - Revisions

DATE: February 24, 2023

POSITION: Oppose

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four local school superintendents, **opposes** Senate Bill 629.

Senate Bill 629 would require local school systems to notify the parent or guardian of a student who is the victim of bullying or harassment within twelve hours of an incident. The bill also waives the parental notification requirement after an incident at the discretion of the student if the incident was found to be motivated by the student's actual or perceived sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Additionally, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) would be required to update the model policy regarding bullying, harassment, or intimidation by September 1, 2023.

PSSAM recognizes the importance of maintaining an inclusive environment for students' expression of sexual orientation and gender identity, but this bill creates a potential for serious liability concerns and legal ramifications as an unintended consequence. Most importantly, the victim may not receive the services he or she needs due to the lack of parental involvement. Under current statute and model policies developed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), school systems are required to notify the parent or guardian of a student who is a victim of bullying, harassment, or intimidation within three business days of an alleged incident, regardless of the motivation of the perpetrator to inflict harm. This bill removes the requirement for schools to notify a parent or guardian if the incident was motivated by the victim's actual or perceived sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Instead, notification would only occur at the student's discretion.

Maryland superintendents promote the utilization of a range of integrated tiered supports for both victims and students exhibiting bullying behaviors, as well as individualized, intensive supports when necessary. Parents and guardians across the state place the utmost trust in local school systems in providing a safe learning environment for all students, a duty that cannot be accomplished without active parental participation. Removing current language that requires parental notification opens local systems to legal action, but more importantly, could prevent the bullied student from receiving appropriate attention at home and school.

While topics of gender and sexuality can be sensitive subjects, the motivation behind any one incident of bullying or harassment, regardless of the subject matter, does not constitute the need for wholesale change in a model policy. We believe that the current policies protect both the student and the school system. Local school systems make every effort to provide culturally responsive social and emotional support for targeted students. These efforts are integrated with trauma informed care and restorative practices to best serve the interest of all involved parties.

For these reasons, PSSAM **opposes** Senate Bill 629 and urges an unfavorable report.

SB 629.Bullying Reporting Mandates and Prohibition

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: UNF

BILL: Senate Bill 629
TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education - Policies on Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation - Revisions
DATE: February 22, 2023
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes Senate Bill 629 which would both mandate certain bullying reports by staff in the absence of student or parental reports, and also prohibit school staff from reporting other bullying incidents based on the underlying motivation for the bullying incident. While MABE recognizes that each of these proposals are grounded in well-intended outcomes for students, the practical application and legal ramifications of these mandated procedures raise serious concerns.

MABE appreciates the General Assembly's strong interest in promoting efforts to reduce incidents of bullying, harassment and intimidation of students. Each of Maryland's twenty-four local school systems take very seriously the challenge and responsibility to address bullying every day, in each of the more than 1,400 public schools across the State. MABE believes that the issues of education, prevention, and responses to the harassment and intimidation, or bullying, of students is being responsibly addressed through existing state and local school system policies and procedures. At the same time, MABE recognizes the need for continued improvements in the law and local school system policies and practices. For example, MABE has supported changes in the law to facilitate the investigation of alleged acts of bullying and particularly cyber bullying and to expedite the protection of victims.

Legislation was enacted in 2016 to ensure that the State's model bullying policy and each local board's bullying policy was updated to appropriately address cyber bullying. This relatively new and extraordinarily harmful phenomena is a serious issue worthy of our collective efforts. Senate Bill 725 would complement these efforts among school administrators and educators and in the courts. Specifically, this bill would clarify the reporting avenues and assurances of liability protection for school principals reporting students and participating in investigations.

Maryland's State Board of Education adopted regulations 20 years ago to address bullying, which state: "All students in Maryland's public schools, without exception and regardless of race, ethnicity, region, religion, gender, sexual orientation, language, socioeconomic status, age, or disability, have the right to educational environments that are safe, appropriate for academic achievement, and free from any form of harassment." (COMAR 13A.01.04.03) The adoption of this language was controversial and took several years to complete. However, the State Board's final action sent a clear signal to all local school systems to bolster efforts to eliminate bullying and harassment, and to respond swiftly and appropriately when such incidents do occur.

For nearly as long, since 2005 the Safe Schools Reporting Act has required MSDE to develop and implement a statewide bullying reporting system. In addition, MSDE has published and distributed a "Harassment or Intimidation (Bullying) Reporting Form", and the "Harassment or Intimidation (Bullying) Incident School Investigation Form;" and collects the locally reported data and compiles annual reports. The activities represent substantial state involvement in monitoring the extent of, and responses to, bullying incidents in local school systems.

Local school boards and superintendents recognize the need for collaboration in developing strategies to reduce incidents of bullying and the need to share best practices. MABE believes this reporting system has raised awareness regarding the importance of sustaining efforts to respond to every incident of bullying that occurs.

In addition to complying with the requirements of the Safe Schools Reporting Act, school boards have adopted policies and directed superintendents to adopt corresponding procedures to prohibit and respond to incidents of bullying. Local school systems place a very high priority on providing an environment in which students feel safe in order to learn and flourish. School systems make clear to all students that any conduct that threatens the safety and sense of well-being of other students and staff will not be tolerated and disciplinary action may be taken. School systems emphasize the need for immediate reporting of all incidents to a teacher, school administrator or other school staff, and all complaints concerning bullying are required to be fully investigated.

Again, MABE believes the provisions of Senate Bill 629 are not aligned with the need for case-by-case decision-making and the professional judgement of educators and administrators in the reporting, investigation, and disciplinary actions taken in response to incidents of bullying, harassment, or intimidation against public school students for any reason.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 629.

UNF for SB0629 vmcavoy.pdf

Uploaded by: vince mcavoy

Position: UNF

SB0629 UNFAVORABLE

Dear Senators,

A bill should never start by REPEALING this.....

“Sexual molestation or exploitation includes:

(1)Allowing or encouraging a child to engage in Unnatural or perverted sexual Practices”.

This has been law of Maryland as long as any of us has been alive.

There is no

justification for a bill that allows “encouraging a child to engage in unnatural or perverted sexual practice”.

Yet this is what the senate sponsor of this bill promoted to you this Session in **SB0054(2023)**.

In the House cross-file to this particular bill, **SB629 (2023)**, discussion this week centered

not on the overwhelming amount of lawless violence being exhibited in Maryland schools but on the oddball child indoctrinated to the LGBTQxyz+++ religion.

This quasi-religion is one of pedophilic indoctrination.

It first exhibited its pedophilic nature in Maryland with the discrimination

against those who would offer a competing values mindset.

That mindset, rightfully promoted by children's own parents, is at the core of the elimination of

parental rights in Maryland. Maryland called the notion of parents aiming to imbue their own children with their own families’ values as some type of conversion therapy. Oh yes, those of the LGBQTP quasi-religion are such wordsmiths. Outside of the LGBTQxyz religion, imbuing values in children is called “parenting”.

- Explain how it is that the state of Maryland, through such senators – such as this sponsor - have a penchant for involving themselves with promoting laws so that youth, toddlers and even infants become and/or embrace this LGBTQ pedophilic quasi-religion ... can you??
- How the instant a child reviews anything other than what 98% of Americans view as normal, such senate sponsors aim to "lock-in" that happenstance review??
- How this same senator was written up for an Ethics Complaint for his unlawful questioning on the Executive Nominating committee of a "Catholic" applying for a leadership position in the Maryland Insurance Administration in 2021??

Pedophilic nature? Strong words, yes? And there are your “receipts”.

Senators, I realize that the 47 of you have traditionally coveted your clubby atmosphere of collegiality amongst yourselves.

My question is::

Must this clubbyness even extend to looking the other way when presented with the pedophilic nature of such bills?

Real bullying is occurring in Maryland schools—see candidate for County Executive Darren Badillo’s twitter feed detailing daily beatings, gunfire and other violence between the majority of students. It’s not related to children experiencing another classmate explaining to them that 98% of America views life one way. That’s just NOT bullying! And remember, that even in D.C.’s Swamp, only 10% classify as part of this quasi-religion . This bill and its now-wide panoply of similar bills, catering to what your previous Senate President referred to as deviancy until very near his last days, is unneeded.

SB629 and the rest are unneeded.

Senator Lam's bill wants to REPEAL this filthy business?

“(a) A person may not:

- (1) take the sexual organ of another or of an animal in the person’s mouth;
- (2) place the person’s sexual organ in the mouth of another or of an animal;
- (3) commit another unnatural or perverted sexual practice with another or with an animal”

Don’t encourage this type of behavior amongst children!

This bill would open loopholes that endanger children and aims to make unnatural, kink and perverted practices acceptable in school when these practices are not acceptable in the home; are mostly illegal; and are perverted in nature.

There are daily perversions/assaults being perpetrated by this quasi-religion who are now **bullying Christians** in Carroll County schools (according to School Board testimony last June 2022) who refuse to embrace this quasi-religion of the flesh.

Transgender arrested in ladies’ room, child porn

<https://twitter.com/libsoftiktok/status/1450904208018968583>

Loudon County pushed LGBT pedophilia books in library

<https://cdn.churchmilitant.com/videos/dist/even-2021-09-27.mp4#t=1740>

Washington Post Readers Revolt ... Kids to Be Exposed to 'Kink' at Pride Parades

<https://www.westernjournal.com/washington-post-readers-revolt-paper-publishes-op-edcalling-kids-exposed-kink-pride-parades/>

The Left Has A Pedophilia Problem, And It's Out In The Open

<https://thefederalist.com/2021/07/30/the-left-has-a-pedophilia-problem-and-its-out-in-the-open/>

Matt Walsh - "We're coming for your children"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9o8nzQ5afwI>

You have the ability to stop this perversion being perpetrated on young, impressionable minds. Let parents decide what is best for their children. Rebuke this bill.

STOP trying to alienate parents while pushing this pedophilic perversion on youngsters.

humbly

~vince

V. McAvoy po box 41075 baltimore md

MD Catholic Conference_SB 629_INFO.pdf

Uploaded by: Garrett O'Day

Position: INFO



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 24, 2023

SB 629
Primary and Secondary Education –
Policies on Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation - Revisions

Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee
Position: INFORMATION ONLY

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this STATEMENT OF INFORMATION on Senate Bill 629. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

In 2011, the General Assembly passed legislation to require nonpublic schools to adopt a policy prohibiting bullying, harassment, and intimidation. Accordingly, our schools have complied with the same for over a decade. Our schools post such policies in their student handbooks and train teachers and administrators to implement the policies. Bullying report forms are readily available to students and incident reporting is encouraged.

Senate Bill 629 would require the State Board of Education and each nonpublic school to update their policies to require twelve-hour notification, as opposed to the three days in current protocol. This presents challenges in its own right, simply because administrators need time to do their diligence in fact-finding before making what might amount to a serious and accusatory report.

Additionally, this bill creates an exception for the notice requirement where the student objects as follows: *“if an act of bullying, harassment, or intimidation is determined to be motivated by the alleged victim’s actual or perceived sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity, notification to the parent or guardian of the alleged victim shall be at the discretion of the alleged victim.”* For school administrators, this presents a serious challenge, both in terms of parental rights and potential liability. It is not only a difficult call for an administrator, but also alarming to parents to not have the right to be privy to troubling or dangerous situations that their own children might be exposed to. Lastly, there are obvious liability concerns if a student were to be later seriously injured through an act of subsequent bullying, wherein the parent or guardian was not notified of an ongoing issue. The civil liability exemptions in the law may not cover every scenario relative to student input or shorter notification period prescribed by this bill.

We express concerns over both the uncertain terms and liability potential created by these clauses. Moreover, the provisions are somewhat conflicting. Does the twelve-hour reporting period include time waiting for the student to consent? If so, which appears affirmative on its face, would administrators have a very difficult time complying with this short window? While Senate Bill 629 may be well-intentioned, its provisions raise some serious concerns for administrators, parents and students.

MDCAPE sb 629 (bullying policies) - INFO.pdf

Uploaded by: Rabbi Ariel Sadwin

Position: INFO



**Maryland's Voice for
Nonpublic Education**

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**SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE**

**SENATE BILL 629
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION - POLICIES ON BULLYING,
HARASSMENT, OR INTIMIDATION - REVISIONS**

FEBRUARY 20, 2023

STATEMENT OF INFORMATION

Maryland CAPE is our state's chapter and one of 40 state chapters of the Council for American Private Education. Our network includes the Catholic, Christian, Evangelical Lutheran, Friends, Independent, Jewish, Lutheran, Montessori, Muslim, and Seventh Day Adventist school communities. We speak on behalf of roughly 120,000 nonpublic school students attending over one thousand nonpublic schools across our great state of Maryland.

We offer this Statement of Information on Senate Bill 629.

For over a decade, our nonpublic schools have published their anti-bullying, harassment, and intimidation policies, as required by Maryland law, and worked to eliminate such abuses from their classrooms, hallways, recreation areas, and, in general, from their students' lives via training and incident reporting. Reporting is encouraged, and reports are taken seriously and acted upon.

Senate Bill 629 would change the current three-day notification policy to twelve hours. Our concern about such a change is that without the adequate time needed to properly assess the incident, administrators and parents will mis-assess the incident, leading to escalations or actions that can fail to protect the victim and can harm innocent parties.

This bill further creates an exception from the notification requirement when the act is determined to be motivated by the actual or perceived sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity of the alleged victim, leaving the notification in such a case to the discretion of the victim.

Such an exemption would seem to be ripe for abuse. Under this clause, if the bully or abuser, aware of this clause, forces the victim to request that no notification be issued, the school would be unable to properly inform the victim's family. A victim suffering from feelings of shame and/or weakness as a result of the abuse may choose that their parent or guardian not be informed, even against their own best interests. And a hasty determination and/or failure by a school to notify other parties may lead to school liability if further incidents occur.

While we support the spirit and intent of Senate Bill 629, we are concerned that some of its provisions may be counterproductive. Thank you.