



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, Inc.

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Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of The Committee: The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland Inc. has voted to offer favorable support for **Senate Bill 814 - Promise Schools – Establishment**. This bill is a 2023 legislative priority of the Black Caucus.

Senate Bill 814 will allow the State Department of Education to identify schools that need help with performance issues and in need of comprehensive support, and designate these schools as “promise schools”. These schools will receive additional funding and support, will be thoroughly analyzed by the local county board of education which will be followed by a plan to improve school outcomes. The schools will also be monitoring students performing poorly, and will transfer schools for the student at the request of the county board to help improve individual performance outcomes. The State Superintendent of Schools will be appointing a Director of Promise Schools, who will help develop an implementation plan and who will oversee this program.

Educational outcomes in Maryland have historically been lower for black students and students of color than for white students. According to the 2022 Maryland Comprehensive Assessment, black and latino students scored 20-40 percentage points lower than white students in math, English language proficiency, reading and writing comprehension, and English language arts. These achievement gaps are unacceptable, and we need to combat the continuing disparity by giving our school systems the support they need to help students reach their full potential. These schools and students are full of potential, and this bill will make sure to draw out that potential by funding them at appropriate levels, and transferring students to environments where they can thrive. I fully support the mission of SB814, and the Black Legislative Caucus is fully behind Senator A. Washington’s initiative.