



## TESTIMONY FOR SB0814

### Promise Schools - Establishment

**Bill Sponsor:** Senator Washington

**Committee:** Education, Energy, and the Environment

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0814 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of individuals and grassroots groups with members in every district in the state with well over 30,000 members.

Maryland is an extremely diverse state. With its big metropolitan areas and its rural Eastern Shore and mountainous Western Maryland counties, it is hard to find a lot of commonality in experience. The goal, though, is to ensure that children across this great state have a similar educational experience and opportunity. But that is something that is hard to achieve. Not every county or jurisdiction has equivalent resources, whether they are financial resources or faculty/teacher resources.

This bill seeks to help the schools that are struggling the most. It requires that the Department of Education identify at least 10 low-performing schools each year and make them Promise Schools. Once identified, the County Board for each county that has a Promise School will perform a comprehensive analysis of the key factors that contribute to the school's low performance. Once that analysis is complete, a three-year plan will be put in place to solve the issues that are keeping students from performing. The plan could include salary increases for recruitment/retention; programs and initiatives that accelerate student learning; tutoring; staff development; and other wraparound services. Funding would be provided to accomplish the plan.

Performance will be monitored for the three-year period. If, at the end of the three years, the school's performance has not improved, students will be allowed to transfer to other non-Promise Schools in the area and will have their transportation costs reimbursed.

While we are strongly supportive of the Promise School program, and believe that it is innovative as well as badly needed, we think that having students transfer to other schools is not a practical solution, particularly in rural areas where there is no alternative school nearby. We believe that after two years, if the Promise School's performance has not improved, a new comprehensive analysis should be made and the a new plan put in place. Additionally, the Promise School at that point, should partner with a high-performing school to help meet the plan goals and improve performance.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report in committee.