



**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate,
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
April 4, 2023**

**Board of Education
of Howard County**

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**HB0461: UNFAVORABLE
Education - Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention Program -
Human and Sex Trafficking**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) opposes **Education - Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention Program - Human and Sex Trafficking** as a mandate on local school system curriculum.

While well-intentioned, HB0461 mandates the content of Health Education curriculum, by requiring that a program of age-appropriate education on the awareness and prevention of sexual abuse and assault include material promoting the awareness and prevention of human and sex trafficking in grades 6 through 8. As a legislative platform the Board supports local decision making in the development of curriculum that accounts for a balance of educational practices, available resources, public input, and accountability that is informed and guided by State Board established standards and models, rather than legislative mandates as encompassed in HB0461.

The Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) provides a comprehensive Health Education program that aligns to State curriculum standards and focuses on a student's development of protective life skills and promotes health and well-being. Topics such as sexual mistreatment, grooming, harassment, abuse, assault, and exploitation are currently included in HCPSS curriculum at all three levels. While Howard County has included human trafficking specifically in middle school curriculum for several years, it was also recently added to the State Health Education framework in grade 7.

For these reasons, we urge a UNFAVORABLE report of HB0461 from this Committee.