



**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House of Delegates,
Judiciary Committee
March 2, 2023**

**Board of Education
of Howard County**

Antonia Watts, *Chair*

Yun Lu, Ph.D., *Vice Chair*

Linfeng Chen, Ph.D.

Jennifer Swickard Mallo

Jacky McCoy

Jolene Mosley

Abisola Ayoola
Student Member

Michael J. Martirano, Ed.D.
*Superintendent
Secretary/Treasurer*

**HB1190: FAVORABLE
Juveniles - Truancy Reduction Pilot Program – Expansion**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **HB1190 Juveniles - Truancy Reduction Pilot Program - Expansion** as an opportunity to work with our local county partners to provide comprehensive supports for students and families in lieu of judicial sanctions.

HB1190 gives all county or circuit court administrative judges the ability to establish a Truancy Reduction and School Reengagement Program. The purpose of the program is the adjudication of truancy cases under § 7-301 of the Education Article. Additionally, the program is charged with identifying the causes of truancy and school disengagement for children participating, assisting children, their parents/guardians, and the school in addressing the causes, and reengaging children to further their education.

In past years, the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) staff has approached the Circuit Court of Howard County with an expressed interest in this program. However, under current law, this program is only available as a pilot in Dorchester, Harford, Kent, Prince George's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester counties. The Board supports the expansion to make the option available in all counties in Maryland. According to an annual report of the existing pilot, "the program is an alternative to punitive measures such as having parents prosecuted in criminal court or stigmatizing the child... A social worker, counselor, or case manager works with families to determine reasons for poor attendance and makes referrals to community-based services when appropriate."

While ultimately establishment of a program in Howard County would be at the discretion of the local administrative judge and in accordance with rules to be established by the Supreme Court of Maryland, HCPSS would need to be involved as a partner in order to make the program successful. This program would give school systems an additional tool and support system to address causes of truancy that may span beyond the scope of the schoolhouse itself.

For these reasons, we urge a FAVORABLE report of HB1190 from this Committee.