



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

**House Bill 16 - Primary and Secondary Education – Title IX – Notice 3 (Hear Our Voices Act)
House Ways & Means Committee – January 24, 2023
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2023 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic clubs in our county with hundreds of politically active women and men, including many elected officials.

WDC urges the passage of HB0016. This bill requires each public elementary and secondary school in the state to notify the school community of the Title IX coordinator, the process for filing a complaint, and most importantly, the range of supportive measures for students and how to access those supports. The bill does not impose any additional data collection or reporting requirements on schools, but simply asks them to live up to the spirit of the law so that student survivors of sexual harassment, assault, and discrimination can better understand and access the supportive measures the schools are obligated to provide.

In a [2021 report](#), the U.S. Government Accountability Office reported over 1,000 cases of rape or reported rape and over 7,000 cases of sexual assault not including rape annually among middle and high school students. With Maryland experiencing ongoing [legal questions](#) surrounding sexting and online sexual harassment, these numbers may continue to grow, affecting students' personal and academic trajectories. All students, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation, deserve to feel safe and supported in school.

Legislators should think about Title IX protection like a three-layer cake of federal law, regulations, and this proposed state legislation. [Existing federal Title IX statute](#) aims to protect students from discrimination based on sex, including students in the K-12 and postsecondary systems, including protections for survivors of sexual harassment, assault, or other forms of sex-based discrimination in the school setting. [Current](#) and [proposed](#) federal regulations around Title IX require that students be notified of who to contact and what the grievance process is should they experience sex-based discrimination.

As the final and crucial layer, this legislation will ensure that any elementary or secondary student who may have experienced tragic sexual harassment, assault, or other forms of sex-based discrimination understands what their options are for formal or informal reporting, what supportive services may help them continue and succeed in their educational journey and how to access those supportive measures, encouraging them to persist in school.

Survivors of sexual harassment and assault—particularly the most vulnerable students in elementary and secondary school settings— don't need barriers to reporting and support services, they need solutions. **For these reasons, we ask for your support for HB0016 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.**

Diana E. Conway
WDC President

Melissa Bender
WDC Advocacy Committee