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Appropriations Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Oral Testimony of Delegate Jazz Lewis
HB16- Primary and Secondary Education – IX – Policies and Procedures (Hear
Our Voices Act of 2023)
Before the Ways and Means Committee

Chair Atterbeary and Vice-Chair Washington,

I am here in strong support of HB16. The Hear Our Voices Act requires that Title IX resources and procedures be readily available and provided to students and parents for their awareness. This includes the necessary information on who serves as the school's Title IX coordinator, what the procedures are for filing a complaint, and what support resources are available to students who are in crisis.

What is Title IX? Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded education program or activity. The principal objective of Title IX is to avoid the use of federal money to support sex discrimination in education programs and to provide individual citizens effective protection against those practices. Some key issue areas in which federal fund recipients have Title IX obligations include admissions, counseling, athletics, as well as sex- based and sexual harassment.

Data from the U.S. Department of Education showed a disturbing trend for Maryland. Between the 2015-16 school year we rose from the 6th highest-ranking state for sexual assault to the 4th. Then, in the 2017-2018 school year from the 4th highest-ranking state for sexual assault to the 3rd.¹

HB bill 16 is a reintroduction from last year and was passed in this form by the committee.

I am reintroducing this bill to ensure that our children and their parents have needed information to hold those accountable who would harm our students. Many students report not knowing of Title IX resources that are available to them at some of their worst moments and they deserve better. While this bill alone will not curb the disturbing trend, it is a major step in the right direction in giving our students and families the information they need to protect themselves and seek needed accountability in our education system.

With this bill, we are taking more proactive steps to protect our students, and systemically combat sexual assault in our schools. For these reasons, I urge a favorable report.

Thank you,

Delegate Jazz Lewis

¹ <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/sexual-violence.pdf>