

GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON SUICIDE PREVENTION

Henry J. Meiser – Student Commissioner

Term: October 2021 to July 2023

TO: House Ways and Means Committee

RE: House Bill 576 – Primary and Secondary Education – Policies on Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation – Revisions

POSITION: Favorable

Chair Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Wilkins, and distinguished members of the Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Henry J. Meiser, and I have had the pleasure of serving as the Student Commissioner to the Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention since 2021, and my subsequent reappointment in 2023 by the Moore-Miller Administration. In this role, I represent all 900,00+ primary and secondary school students within the State of Maryland. I also regularly present and speak as a subject-matter expert on school safety, school security, and the mental health and wellbeing of students in the United States. While not here to testify on behalf of the commission as a whole, I am here to testify in my capacity as the Student Commissioner in unequivocal favor of House Bill 576.

As the Student Representative to the Commission, it is without a question that my first priority is to advocate for the mental, physical, and overall wellbeing of Maryland students both in and outside of school. In most simplest terms, House Bill 576 provides additional protections for students in the State of Maryland who are victim to bullying at school.

In altering §7-424(b), 7-424.1(b), and 7-424.3(c), this bill is ensuring that we hold parents and guardians accountable for the reporting of bullying, harassment, and intimidation of their student at school, by mandating that, if such a report is not made by a parent or guardian in a timely manner, a qualified school staff member will be responsible for making the report.

Most notable, and of greatest priority to me as the Student Commissioner, is the protections this bill provides to students who are particularly vulnerable to bullying and harassment at school and unfortunately in some instances, at home too. This protection, being that, if a student is victim to bullying, harassment, or intimidation regarding or perceived to be regarding their gender identity, sex, or sexual identity, the decision to notify a parent or guardian remains in the hand of the victim.

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This protection not only allows students to build trust with out school-level staff members and administrators, but can also protect students from experiencing undue and unwarranted mental duress at home. By leaving this decision in the hands of our students, referred to in the bill as “the victim”, we are also ensuring that our school-level administrators are not forced to “out” a student, or, in other words, disclose any portion of a student’s sexual or gender identity which they do not wish to disclose.

According to the National LGBTQ Task Force, “the act of outing someone, particularly young people, can be detrimental because it is the greatest violation of one’s privacy, and their trust”.¹ This information is information should not be disclosed at the request or demand of anyone but the victim (or student).

For these reasons, and for the purposes of continuing to provide our students the most healthy classroom environment possible, I urge this committee to issue a favorable report on HB 576 – Primary and Secondary Education – Policies on Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation – Revisions.

Most Respectfully,



Henry J. Meiser
Student Commissioner
**Gov.’s Commission on
Suicide Prevention**

¹ The National LGBTQ Task Force, “Why Outing Can be Deadly” <https://www.thetaskforce.org/why-outing-can-be-deadly/>