



**Testimony in support of
House Bill 576: Primary and Secondary Education – Policies on Bullying,
Harassment, or Intimidation – Revisions**

**Ways and Means Committee
Position: Favorable**

February 22, 2023

Strong Schools Maryland is a network of education advocates dedicated to ensuring the full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. **Strong Schools Maryland urges a favorable vote on House Bill 576: Primary and Secondary Education – Policies on Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation – Revisions.**

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future envisions a World-Class system of public schools for our state's students. It cannot function properly without the proper policies in place to provide safe, protected learning environments that allow all students to thrive. This legislation updates Maryland's reporting requirements for incidents of bullying, harassment, or intimidation.

House Bill 576:

- Strengthens reporting requirements for public and nonpublic schools in incidents of bullying, harassment, or intimidation;
- Shortens the notification time from 3 days to 12 hours for parents or guardians of alleged victims; and
- Increases the agency of students by allowing students the discretion of notifying their parents of an incident when it relates to actual or perceived sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Currently, MSDE must require a local board of education to report incidents of bullying, harassment, or intimidation against students attending a public school in its jurisdiction. In the 2019–2020 school year, there were 4,810 bullying incidents reported in public schools.¹ 3.85% of these cases were specifically related to the student’s perceived sexual orientation. The Blueprint speaks to investment in integrated Restorative Practices strategy across all public schools to pre-emptively and responsively address school community behavioral and mental health needs; however, patterns of bullying and harassment persist. Thus the crucial need for modern policies to support students, especially students who have been historically let down by our education systems.

It is the responsibility of the Maryland General Assembly to advance legislation that fosters trustworthy relationships between schools and students. We urge this committee to vote “yes” to strengthen reporting policies for incidents of bullying, harassment, or intimidation, which directly aligns with your commitment to the Blueprint.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 576.

For more information, contact:

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¹ [MSDE Report](#)