



Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair
Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Vice Chair
Room 131
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 11, 2023

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

Position: Support

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA), a professional organization representing about 500 school psychologists in Maryland. We advocate for the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic wellbeing of students and families across the state.

We support House Bill 576 which would revise the state of Maryland's model policy for bullying, harassment, and intimidation to protect students with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. Specifically, the bill would revise the policy to protect the alleged victim by allowing the victim to determine if their parents should be notified if the bullying, harassment, and/or intimidation is related to the victim's sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. This would reduce the likelihood that the student may face retaliation or negative consequences for their expression of their sexual orientation or gender identity in the home environment.

School psychologists are "ethically obligated to ensure that all youth with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and/or gender expressions are able to develop and express their personal identities in a school climate that is safe, accepting, and respectful of all persons and free from discrimination, harassment, violence, and abuse."¹ At home, LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to experience "family rejection, which may include abuse, exclusion, being forced to leave home, and efforts to change a youth's sexual orientation or gender identity."¹ HB 576 would protect a vulnerable student population from negative consequences and fear of retaliation for reporting instances of bullying, harassment, and intimidation. All students must feel safe at school in order to learn, and HB 576 could increase the positive outcomes of students with diverse gender identity and sexual orientation.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB576. If we can provide any further information or be of assistance, please contact us at legislative@mspasonline.org or Sarah Peters at speters@hbstrategies.us or 410-322-2320.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Phipps, M.Ed., Ed.S., NCSP
Committee Chair, Legislative Committee
Maryland School Psychologists' Association.

1. [National Association of School Psychologists Position Statement: Safe and Supportive Schools for LGBTQ+ Youth](#)