

January 31, 2025

The Honorable Ben Barnes
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
Maryland General Assembly
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Support for House Bill 86 – Institutions of Higher Education and Elementary and Secondary Schools - Title VI Coordinators

Dear Chair Barnes and Members of the House Appropriations Committee,

On behalf of Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU), I am writing to express our strong support for House Bill 86 (HB0086), which mandates that all institutions of higher education and local school systems in Maryland designate a Title VI Coordinator to ensure compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This legislation establishes a clear mechanism for addressing racial and ethnic discrimination in education, safeguarding the rights of students, particularly those from Latino and other marginalized communities who often face systemic barriers in educational institutions.

Discrimination in schools, whether through policies that fail to provide adequate resources to Latino students or through direct acts of exclusion, continues to be a pressing issue. A 2022 report from the U.S. Department of Education found that Latino students are disproportionately disciplined and are less likely to have access to advanced coursework compared to their white peers. By requiring each institution to appoint a Title VI Coordinator, HB 86 ensures that students have a direct advocate responsible for addressing these disparities and enforcing anti-discrimination policies effectively.

This bill provides a much-needed infrastructure for accountability. Currently, many instances of discrimination go unreported or unresolved due to a lack of clarity regarding enforcement. HB 86 not only mandates designated oversight but also establishes a formal complaint process, empowering students and parents to take action when their rights are violated. This framework is essential in addressing racial disparities in school discipline, access to resources, and equitable treatment in both K-12 and higher education settings.

Ensuring compliance with Title VI will lead to tangible improvements in educational outcomes. Research from the National Center for Education Statistics indicates that schools with strong anti-discrimination enforcement see higher graduation rates and improved academic performance among minority students. For Maryland's Latino population—comprising nearly 12% of the state's residents—this bill is critical in promoting a more inclusive and fair educational system.

We respectfully urge the members of the House Appropriations Committee to issue a favorable report on HB0086. Passing this legislation is a crucial step in reinforcing Maryland's commitment to educational equity, protecting the rights of Latino and other minority students, and ensuring that all students can learn in an environment free from discrimination.

Sincerely,

Carlos Orbe, Jr.

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