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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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SB948 Children – Parental Rights – Educational Rights

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and member of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

SB 948 addresses the fundamental right of parents to oversee and provide direction for the education of their children. This right, while not absolute, is deeply rooted in legal precedent and societal values. Supporting parent's right to make informed decisions through access to information fosters a collaborative partnership that prioritizes the well-being and individual needs of each child.

One of the strongest arguments for parental rights stems from the recognition that parents are the primary caregivers and have the most intimate knowledge of their children. They are uniquely positioned to understand their child's strengths, weaknesses, and individual learning styles. Parental involvement ensures that education is not a one-size-fits-all approach, but rather a tailored experience that caters to the specific needs of each student. Parental involvement is demonstrably linked to improved student outcomes. Research consistently shows that children whose parents are actively engaged in their education tend to have higher grades, better attendance, and fewer behavioral problems. When parents are empowered to participate in school decisions, they become invested stakeholders, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for student success. This collaborative environment benefits the entire school community.

Parents deserve transparency regarding their child's education, including curriculum, assessment results, and school policies. This transparency allows parents to make informed decisions about their child's education and to address any concerns promptly. Denying access to this information undermines their ability to advocate for their child's best interests. Moreover, the increasing diversity of family structures and values necessitates a greater emphasis on parental rights. Schools should be spaces that respect and accommodate diverse perspectives, treading carefully in controversial subject matter. Parents have the right to guide their children's moral and ethical development, and schools should work in partnership with parents. This includes the right to opt out of certain curriculum content that conflicts with their deeply held beliefs.

Critics argue that excessive parental involvement can disrupt school operations and undermine the expertise of educators. However, this bill promotes reasonable access that furthers open

communication and collaboration. When parents and educators work together, they can create a synergistic environment that benefits all students. Establishing clear channels of communication, fostering mutual respect, and developing collaborative decision-making processes can mitigate potential conflicts and ensure that parental involvement is constructive. This is particularly true in regard to providing information on school contracts with outside organizations - parents have a right to know who is partnering with their school system. Is the student news provided by CNN or Fox? Should parents be told the Health Department will be giving a survey asking 6th graders how many sexual partners they had? This bill is absolutely necessary to give all students the same rights that are given to TITLE 1 students and be codified into State law.

This bill establishes what is called the Family Engagement Plan in Title 1 to increase parent participation in their students' education- which is on pg. 66 of the MSDE Title 1, Part A Program Guide.¹ It will also provide access to curriculum and instructional materials- as outlined on page 69 1-3. (read from sheet) The next part about letting parents know about programs and other activities at school needs to be shared with parents and reasonable support given for parent involvement- this is on page 70 items 4-6. Parents can help decide the level of their student's involvement, as this does not mean they are attempting to dictate what anyone else's child is taught or what is offered at the school- only partnering in the education of their own child. One of the ESSA recommendations is to create a parent advisory board to monitor progress of family plan implementation- this board could be the committee to evaluate complaints. The bill says that the County Board of Education has ultimate authority in the appeal decision.

In conclusion, protecting parents' rights in schools is not about creating adversarial relationships between parents and educators. It's about recognizing the fundamental role of parents in their children's lives and fostering a collaborative partnership that prioritizes the best interests of each student.

Please vote favorably on SB948.

¹ [Title I Part A Program Guide](#)