



SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

MARCH 5, 2025

SENATE BILL 916 EDUCATION - CURRICULUM STANDARDS - REQUIREMENTS (EDUCATE TO STOP THE HATE ACT) FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Maryland CAPE is our state's chapter and one of 40 state chapters of the Council for American Private Education. Our network includes the Catholic, Christian, Evangelical Lutheran, Friends, Independent, Jewish, Lutheran, Montessori, Muslim, and Seventh Day Adventist school communities. We speak on behalf of over 135,000 nonpublic school students attending over one thousand nonpublic schools across our great state of Maryland.

Senate Bill 916 recognizes that “hate, bigotry, and prejudice undermine the very fabric of our society,” and that “hateful sentiment is reaching unprecedented levels in contemporary society.” As an attempt to combat this alarming trend, SB 916 would require various curriculum standards focusing on the teaching of the historical context of prejudice and persecution, the history and contributions of minorities, and the history of marginalized groups.

Following developments from last year's legislation, this year's bill would require some, but not all, nonpublic schools to follow the curriculum requirements. As currently amended, the bill includes nonpublic schools holding a Certificate of Approval from the Maryland State Department of Education in its requirements, but exempts nonpublic schools that are operated by a bona fide church organization, commonly referred to as “church exempt” schools.

We share the concern about the rise of hate, and support efforts to combat it. At the same time, we view it as imperative that the operational and educational independence of Maryland's nonpublic school community be maintained. Our schools provide proper historical education on the educational subjects outlined by the bill. At the same time, our schools tailor their lessons to meet their students' needs. The value of allowing Maryland's nonpublic schools to craft their curriculum independently (while ensuring they meet State licensing, approval, and institutional requirements) is long recognized, and should not be compromised, admirable as the intent may be.

Many of our schools hold a Certificate of Approval from the Department of Education but are not classified as “church exempt,” and it is important that these schools too are allowed to retain their educational integrity. As such, we respectfully ask that the bill be **amended** to “encourage” (rather than require) all nonpublic schools to include the curriculum, expanding the current language of page 6, line 24 – Section (B)(2) – to allow

educational independence for all nonpublic schools, whether church-exempt or simply holders of a Certificate of Approval, and striking the language requiring certain nonpublic schools to follow the curriculum.

Alternatively, we would respectfully ask that all references to nonpublic schools be removed entirely from the bill, allowing them to retain their educational independence.

Amendment to Senate Bill 916

Amendment No. 1

On Page 6, line 59, strike: “and all nonpublic schools in the State that hold a Certificate of Approval issued by the State Board of Education under § 2–206 of the Education Article”

Amendment No. 2

On Page 6, line 24, strike: “A nonpublic school that is operated by a registered bona fide church organization or that has not been approved by the State Board under § 2–206 of the Education Article, is” and insert: “NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE”