

SB0948 Favorable A_Rizzo.pdf

Uploaded by: Allison Rizzo

Position: FAV

I am a parent of three children currently enrolled in Maryland public schools. My spouse and I make a great effort to be very involved in their education and it is a priority for our family. I represent thousands of parents from across the state who also care deeply about the education of their children and choose to enroll them in public schools.

I urge you to vote in favor of SB0948 Children – Parental Rights – Educational Rights. This bill is important to pass. The law must establish that parents are the primary educators of their children and bear the full privilege and responsibility of that position. Maryland schools need this foundational guidance to ensure full partnership with parents.

I have worked hard to engage in positive relationships with teachers and administrators at the schools where my children attend. Still, I am not regularly informed of what my children are taught and what they are reading. This excludes me from participating in their education. Instead, I want trusting relationships with teachers and the ability to opt in and out of content to ensure that my child's needs are met. Additionally, I have been told by some community members that I should homeschool my children because my belief system does not belong in public school. That is not inclusive and is a false interpretation of the purpose of public school.

This bill accurately represents the importance of including parents in the process of educating children. If enacted, it will help to improve learning outcomes for Maryland students. Please return a favorable report on SB0948.

Thank you,
Allison Rizzo
Frederick, Maryland

SB0948 Parental Rights (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Janet Greenhawk

Position: FAV

SB 0948 Parental Rights Bill- Support

To: Members of the Senate Education, Energy and Environment

Parental Rights are the foundation of any society. Parents are their child's primary caretaker, teacher, advocate, role model, protector and influencer. Parents are the ones who are there for every milestone, every illness, every heartbreak, and every accomplishment. As a principal I worked with once told me, "When a parent brings their child to our school, they are bringing us their best hopes for the future. We must safeguard that relationship and our relationship with parents so we can work together."

As a teacher of over thirty years, I can testify that when I was able to work with parents and understand what they wanted for their children, I was able to teach that child so much more effectively. Not only that, but children whose parents were involved in educational decision making, were much happier, well-adjusted children.

Somehow, the State of Maryland has forgotten that fundamental truth. So, let me remind you. The government is NOT a child's parent. A teacher is NOT a child's parent. Legislators are NOT a child's parent. Government officials will not be there during sleepless nights when a parent is getting their child through illness or any other time a child needs a parent.

Yet, in our schools, some have decided that parents don't need to see and know what is taught to their children. They hide curriculum. They hide from parents conversations that school staff has with children all in the fraudulent claim that they are "protecting the child." They are doing no such thing. They are allowing themselves to assume the role of parent and in turn, are breaking the important trust between a child and his/her parent. This must be stopped.

Parental rights are for every parent, rich, poor, while, black, Hispanic, gay, etc. Parental rights are for parents of any religious beliefs whether Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, agnostic or atheist and must be respected.

We know that when government replaces the bonds children have with parents and families, this leads to the ultimate destruction of that society. Even more horrible, it mentally disables children and erodes their trust in others so that they cannot be happy, productive, and accomplished adults.

This bill would guarantee that ALL parents have the fundamental rights to direct the education, medical care and moral upbringing of their children.

I urge you to vote for ALL children and parents in Maryland and vote FOR this bill. To do otherwise is to deny children and parents the most important relationship of their lives.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jan Greenhawk

Chapter Chair, Moms for Liberty Talbot County

100 Willows Avenue

Oxford, Maryland 21654

410-463-3868

SB0948 Parental Rights.pdf

Uploaded by: Janet Greenhawk

Position: FAV

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Jan Greenhawk

Chapter Chair, Moms for Liberty Talbot County

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SB 948 Parental Rights Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Justin Ready

Position: FAV

JUSTIN READY
Legislative District 5
Carroll County

MINORITY WHIP
Finance Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 7, 2025

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](#)

Yes on SB0948.pdf

Uploaded by: Rebekah Esko

Position: FAV

Yes on SB0948

Parental involvement in a child's education including school-family communication has a positive impact on student learning outcomes (1). SB0948 encourages and facilitates parental involvement in their childrens' learning.

Transparency in learning and teaching allows parents to understand, help teach, and support their children and the school. Allowing parents to access learning materials will further this goal.

In our diverse communities, there are many parents who distrust schools. The ability of parents to opt their child out of topics that they feel are age inappropriate or not culturally sensitive will increase trust and discourage their students from dropping out of school.

Finally, the provision of alert and opt out of family life and human sexuality topics affirms the Constitutional right of parents to direct the upbringing of their children, including choosing when and how they learn sexual topics. However, I propose expanding this section to include the topics of "gender identity and sexual orientation." These are clearly sexual topics and normally included in the family life and human sexuality unit in health. However, recent efforts to label "gender identity and sexual orientation" as a separate topic means that this area should also be included in this bill.

Thank you for your consideration. Please give SB0948 a favorable report

1.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/374978615_A_Systematic_Review_of_Literature_on_Parental_Involvement_and_Its_Impact_on_Children_Learning_Outcomes

SB 0948 Bd-Ed-ParentalInvolvement.pdf

Uploaded by: SHARON CARRICK

Position: FAV



Ella Ennis, Legislative Chairman
Maryland Federation of Republican Women
PO Box 6040, Annapolis MD 21401
Email: eee437@comcast.net

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chairman
and Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
Senate of Maryland
Annapolis, Maryland

RE: **SB0948** – Children – Parental Rights – Educational Rights - **FAVORABLE**

Dear Chairman Feldman and Committee Members,

The Maryland Federation of Republican Women strongly supports SB0948 to ensure that parents are advised about and involved in their children's education. Having parents participate in the development of policies governing the education of their children will promote **better understanding and cooperation among teachers, administrators, and parents**. That cooperation will lead to **better student outcomes**.

SB0948 will aid parents in carrying out their ultimate duty -- the care and direction of their children.

Parents need to be informed when there are concerns about or changes in the behavior of their children. Requiring parental notice when a student is disruptive, has been attacked, requests to use a different gender, name or pronoun, or seeks mental health counseling is essential to the well-being of the child.

Parents are the ones who must deal with the consequences of school policies long after school hours have ended. They need to have information on all extracurricular activities and clubs their child enrolls in and be able to approve or deny the student's participation in that activity. Parental rights must be respected.

SB0948 removes ambiguity about the rights of parents and supports parents' engagement in their child's education.

Please vote a **FAVORABLE** report for **SB0948**.

Sincerely,
Ella Ennis
Legislative Chairman
Maryland Federation of Republican Women

Support SB 948.pdf

Uploaded by: Suzie Scott

Position: FAV



Moms for Liberty Maryland Legislative Committee urges a favorable report for SB 948 cross-filed with HB 1385: *Children -Parental Rights - Educational Rights*

The number one indicator of student success is parental involvement. Research consistently shows that students whose parents are actively engaged in their education tend to perform better academically, exhibit higher levels of motivation, and have better social-emotional outcomes. This involvement can range from providing support at home, participating in school events, or collaborating with teachers to ensure the child's needs are being met. While there are many factors that contribute to student success, including teaching quality, access to resources, and student motivation, parental involvement is consistently identified as a key factor in helping students thrive both academically and personally.

This bill is a much-needed affirmation of parents' rightful place in their children's education. If there is any hope of achieving a world class education for Maryland students, it must begin with trust, transparency, and ensuring that families have the tools to stay involved and informed. As parents, we want to be partners in our children's learning, not bystanders. SB 948 makes that possible by boosting parental involvement. This isn't just a vague promise; it's a concrete plan to increase participation and improve cooperation between home and school.

One of the standout features of this bill is its commitment to transparency. It guarantees parents the right to review all curricula, instructional materials, and even teacher training resources—whether online or in writing. Parents will also know the purpose of every school club or extracurricular activity. The most important ingredient in the recipe for success between families and schools is transparency because transparency builds trust.

Parents know their children better than anyone. They are the first and primary teachers. Increasing parents' partnership with their children's school, is a win-win for everyone.

This bill also safeguards parents' right to know about their children's well-being. Parents and school staff need to be on the same page. Passing this legislation tells parents across Maryland that our voices matter, that we're not just spectators in our children's education.

We urge you to give a favorable report to SB 948 and send a clear message: in Maryland, parents and schools are partners, working together for our children's future.

Neumark Support SB948.pdf

Uploaded by: Tom Neumark

Position: FAV

Support SB948

I'm a Frederick parent who supports this bill. There are so many benefits to it, it's hard to imagine how anyone could be against it.

Having curriculum and lessons posted online will help students who are absent from school, making it easier for parents to help their child and be involved. This transparency ensures that schools maintain viewpoint neutrality and reduces the likelihood that schools will be falsely accused of being either too woke or too conservative. There is little additional burden on teachers in most cases, since most textbook companies offer online access to their materials.

As a pro choice family, you ought to be able to withdraw your child from a Students for Life club or a Republican club. No child should have to sit through a presentation from Brave Books or CareNet if their parents object. And vice versa for other families.

Parents who want to socially transition their child should have the right to demand in writing that the school use their child's preferred pronouns and have those wishes honored. And for parents whose therapist does not recommend that their child transition, putting this in writing will ensure the school and family are on the same page. In both cases this will remove legal liability for school staff and end a great deal of unnecessary controversy.

Our opposition argues that good parents like me must not have the right to choose whether their children are transitioned at school to a new gender identity because some other parents are unfit. Based on that logic, we should all turn in our driver's licenses because other drivers are bad. The legislature has no justification to take away the rights of the many good parents for the rare misdeeds of a few.

Obtaining parental consent for topics covered in family life and human sexuality gives lesbian and gay families the chance to ensure these topics are presented without bias or homophobia. Families with different moral beliefs, or whose child was recently sexually abused or simply not ready for these topics, would be able to withdraw their child if needed.

This bill supports all families, no matter what their beliefs or circumstances, and allows them to be more involved in their child's education. I hope you will support it and urge a favorable report.

Written Testimony for SB 948_HB 1385_ Children - P

Uploaded by: Trudy Tibbals

Position: FAV

Written Testimony for SB 948/HB 1385: Children - Parental Rights - Educational Rights -Please **VOTE YES** in favor of this bill.

Dear Ways and Means Committee and Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

This bill reads "...Requiring each county board of education, in consultation with certain individuals, to develop and implement a certain policy to promote parental involvement in students' education; establishing a complaint and appeals process for violations of a certain policy; etc..."

SB 948/HB 1385 is a common sense bill that protects our children from political interests and upholds parents' constitutional right to care for their children and be in charge of their children's education. Regardless of your politics, for those of us with children, we are PARENTS first. We are the people that love our children the most. We want what is best for our children. We want our children to grow up to be happy, healthy and productive adults. We want our children to contribute positively to society. We, as parents, know our children the best. NOT governmental agencies, NOT government officials.

We as parents are protected by law to handle the moral and religious upbringing of our children. We the parents should be making the decisions as to what types of materials are used in the classroom and for educational projects or assignments, including what types of books our children are exposed to and at what ages. If we as parents do not want pornographic or obscene material to be available to our children or assigned for our children to read or review, then we the parents have the right to make that call, NOT government officials, teachers, librarians or other school personnel. We are legally protected in our religious teachings to our children. And when our religious and spiritual teachings are in conflict with any material that is presented to our children in school, we the parents have the right to decide if that material is appropriate for our children. If we the parents decide that any material is not appropriate for our children, we the parents have the right to have the "assignment" changed to what we the parents do agree is appropriate for our children.

Parents are tax-paying citizens and have the right to engage in civic participation in the development and implementation of any and all public and private school programs and any and all curricula.

Parents demonstrably have the highest vested interest in their children's welfare and are best equipped to make important decisions for their children regarding their education.

These are simple requests that we the parents are making. And we the parents have the fundamental and constitutional right to make them. And you, our representatives, have the obligation to abide by our constitutional rights.

Therefore, please **VOTE YES** on this bill to show that you support parental rights in education.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals

A Very Concerned Mother of 3 and Resident of Maryland

Maureen Wambui - Support Testimony for SB0948 - Ch

Uploaded by: Maureen Wambui

Position: FWA

Maureen Wambui

7827 Rolling View Ave, Nottingham, MD, 21236

Maureen.w.m.2030@gmail.com

03/05/2025

The Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
Maryland General Assembly, Annapolis, MD 21401

Support Testimony for SB0948 - Children - Parental Rights - Educational Rights

Hearing Date: March 07, 2025

Chairperson and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

My name is Maureen Wambui, and I am a proud Immigrant, Parent, Community advocate and resident of Legislative District 8 in Maryland. I appreciate the opportunity to testify to and express my strong support for **Senate Bill 948 (SB0948)**, which seeks to enhance parental involvement in students' education by requiring county school boards to develop structured policies and complaint resolution processes.

Parental engagement is a critical factor in student success. Research consistently demonstrates that when parents are actively involved in their children's education, students perform better academically, exhibit improved behavior, and are more likely to graduate. SB0948 strengthens this crucial link by mandating school boards to create comprehensive policies that encourage parental participation, provide clear guidelines, and establish mechanisms for resolving concerns.

Why This Bill is Necessary

1. **Encourages Parental Engagement** – Many parents, especially those from minority backgrounds, face systemic barriers to participating in their children's education. A formalized policy will ensure that all parents have a clear, structured way to be involved, benefiting students across all communities.
2. **Increases School Accountability** – Requiring school boards to create transparent parental involvement policies ensures that schools are responsive to the needs of students and families, ultimately improving the education system.
3. **Establishes a Clear Complaint Resolution Process** – Many parents feel unheard when raising concerns with school administrators. This bill provides them with a structured method to voice their concerns and seek resolution.

4. **Strengthens School-Parent Relationships** – A well-implemented policy will promote collaboration rather than conflict, creating a shared commitment to student success.
5. **Promotes Equity in Education** – Families of all backgrounds should have equal opportunities to engage in their children's education. SB0948 ensures that schools actively work toward inclusivity in parental involvement.

Recommended Amendments for Effective Implementation

While I strongly support SB0948, I urge the committee to consider the following recommendations to ensure its effective and equitable implementation:

1. **Statewide Guidelines for Policy Development** – While local control is important, the Maryland State Department of Education should provide standardized guidelines to ensure consistency across counties while allowing flexibility for local needs.
2. **Training for School Staff and Parents** – Schools should be required to provide training for administrators, teachers, and parents on effective engagement strategies to prevent adversarial interactions and encourage constructive dialogue.
3. **Accessible and Culturally Inclusive Policies** – Policies should be translated into multiple languages and designed to accommodate families with limited English proficiency or those unfamiliar with the U.S. education system.
4. **Independent Oversight Body** – An independent advisory board could be established to review implementation and address concerns related to the fairness of complaint resolutions.
5. **Periodic Review and Public Input** – The policy should include provisions for periodic review and adjustments based on feedback from parents, educators, and community stakeholders.

By incorporating these recommendations, SB0948 will be more effective in fostering meaningful parental engagement, promoting equity, and ensuring that schools and families work together to create the best possible educational outcomes for students.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB0948 and look forward to its passage with thoughtful implementation strategies.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Maureen Wambui

CFCC Written Testimony - SB 948.pdf

Uploaded by: Aubrey Edwards-Luce

Position: UNF

Oppose SB 948

Children – Parental Rights – Educational Rights

Friday, March 7, 2025

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan and Esteemed Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
FROM: Executive Director Aubrey Edwards-Luce, MSW, Esq.

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan and Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

I am the Executive Director at the Sayra and Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families, Children, and the Courts (CFCC) at the University of Baltimore School of Law. CFCC promotes child and family well-being while inspiring the next generation of attorneys to prioritize the power, voice, and needs of families. We engage communities as we work tirelessly to transform systems that create barriers to family well-being. CFCC values the dignity of families and the voices and wisdom of communities. In all that we do, we exercise compassion, integrity, and transparency, and we are guided by the principles of social justice, anti-racism, and inclusion. CFCC has run a program that works in partnership with Baltimore City Public Schools, students and their families to reduce chronic absenteeism for almost 20 years. As such, we are very familiar with the complicated dynamics that sometimes exist in the relationships between parents and schools and empathize with the desire to have more control over children's education. However, **SB 948 would make it harder for our most vulnerable families to have their voices heard, would harm already marginalized children and would create hardships for our schools and we therefore urge an unfavorable report.**

SB 948 attempts to fabricate legal authority for parents to weaken one of Maryland's greatest assets – our diversity. As the testimony of our family law colleagues demonstrates, SB 948 aims to create new parental rights that do not currently exist. These rights such as reviewing school curriculum and instructional materials not only create extreme hardships for school administrations and teachers, but they are meant to allow parents to object to material that does not align with their personal world view. Such a right has never existed. This bill is a thinly veiled attempt to ensure that the voices of certain parents are elevated over the voices of parents who are marginalized and may lack political capital. Groups of parents who object to the accurate teaching of history including that of Indigenous, Black and LGBTQ people seek ammunition to attack such curriculum even though such history is crucial to understanding our lives and society today. This bill would prioritize the learning that aligns only certain religious and moral beliefs, despite the fact that we live in a state that embraces diversity of religion, culture, ethnicity, socio-economic status, values, and sexual orientation and identity. It could lead to the erasure of important learning on our differences that are crucial for ensuring a tolerant, accepting and empathetic society – the kind of society that have made us choose Maryland as our home.

Further, SB 948 would burden the creation of life-affirming student-teacher relationship for children with non-affirming parents. This bill would require schools to have to get consent from parents before using a child's pronouns that align with their gender identity. In many cases, this would require educators to act against their students' best interest despite their expertise in child development and behavioral and mental health.

Transgender children of non-affirming parents experience higher rates of mental health consequences including depression, self-harm and even suicide than their peers. A supportive school environment that allows transgender children to be themselves can mitigate these very serious effects. Many parents may take time to accept their children's gender identify and a safe school can allow children to gradually transition without fear.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Please feel free to contact me with any questions at AEwardsLuce@ubalt.edu.

Transgender children may also experience bullying and misgendering by their peers that can make school difficult. But knowing that their educators and school administrators support them can make a world of difference to a young person.

This bill would also be an administrative nightmare for our already overburdened school personnel. Every time a child opts-out of a class, the school must find a safe, supervised setting for that child. Many teachers may be working on improving their materials until right before their classes but under this bill, would have to share in advance. One could imagine that if a student asked a question that changed the direction of the class from exactly what was provided in the materials as likely happens every day, parents could be upset.

Finally, the language of the bill is overbroad, vague and confusing. For example, under this bill, school would have to share all information related to a student's "physical, emotional or mental health." In addition to the fact that this undervalues students' rights to privacy and will undermine trust between students and educators, reasonable minds could differ on what information relates to a student's "emotional or mental health." We hope that all students have relationships with their parents that are open and honest, but even in those situations, students often turn to their educators for second opinions on topics that are important to them. And when they do *not* have transparent relationships with their parents, the ability to have candid conversations with their educators are even more crucial

Contrary to the asserted goals, this bill would not "improv[e] parent and teacher cooperation in areas relating to homework, attendance and discipline." It would create distrust and hostility between parents and teachers because parents would constantly dispute the educational and pedagogical choices of our valued instructors. Even without this bill, parents have many opportunities to participate in their child's education and school life. If parents want to know what is going on in their child's school, they could review their homework, attend parent-teacher conferences, attend school events and ask their child. If they object to any topic, they can complain to the teacher, to the principal, the PTA, the school board or the superintendent. Parents and schools both have important roles in ensuring the well-being and positive development of our youth. This bill would merge those roles and put parents in the roles of our trusted educators to the detriment of our children. **For these reasons, CFCC urges you to issue an unfavorable report on SB 948.**

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at AEwardsLuce@ubalt.edu.

SB0948 Written Testimony Parental Rights in Educat

Uploaded by: Ayla Hurley

Position: UNF

Ayla Hurley
6385 Windharp Way
Columbia, MD 21045
District 13

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF SB0948, Children - Parental Rights - Educational Rights
2/18/2025

TO: Chair Feldman and the Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
FROM: Ayla Hurley

Chair Feldman and members of the committee, my name is Ayla Hurley and I've resided in Maryland my entire life. HB1385 is described as: *“Requiring each county board of education, in consultation with **certain individuals**, to develop and implement a **certain policy** to promote parental involvement in students' education; and establishing a complaint and appeals process for violations of a **certain policy**.”* Who are these “certain individuals” going to be? Will these be people who understand that representation of different ways of being is vital to childrens’ well-being and positive sense of self?

What is this “certain policy?” As written, this smacks of a way for restrictive bans promoted by limited minds to remove “woke” “DEI” materials - words that mean something, but not what their colloquial use has warped them into - from childrens’ ability to access them. But banning a book, or reading a book for that matter, does not *change* a child’s identity. Children have a right to their own education, and to see themselves, who they already are, reflected in their educational material. According to Heather Rose Artushin, LISW-CP (“Why Book Bans Are Bad for Mental Health,”

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/well-read/202405/why-book-bans-are-bad-for-mental-health>):

“Research supports that book bans are bad for mental health, especially impacting:

1. Marginalized individuals whose stories are contained in the majority of challenged books. Research shows that people of color are at a higher risk of facing mental health issues, and have increased barriers to accessing mental health treatment, due to institutional and interpersonal discrimination, stigma, and socioeconomic barriers (Williams DR., 2018). LGBTQIA+ individuals are nearly three times more likely to develop a mental health disorder, like depression or anxiety, and some studies indicate that nearly 45% of LGBTQIA+ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the last year (The Trevor Project, 2022). Banning books about the lived experiences and histories of marginalized groups of people only serve to increase feelings of exclusion and invisibility, and intensify their risk of mental health issues (Pickering, G., 2023).

2. Children and teens suffer when books are banned in their schools and public libraries for many reasons. As young people are in a developmental period of identity formation with a strong focus on peer relationships, banning diverse books robs them of the opportunity to have an open dialogue and engage in critical thinking in a safe, supportive environment (Pfeifer JH, Berkman ET., 2018). Youth are likely to seek information elsewhere, from unmonitored, unsafe sources, without the support of trusted adults.”

When these “certain policies” written by “certain individuals” cannot even be named in the legislation, that strikes me as disingenuous, and not the kind of vague language I want for children in Maryland to have to contend with. Parents already have options to opt-out of certain sensitive material due to religious objections, and this feels like a major stretch of that right. Parents who want to fully control their children’s educational material have every opportunity to homeschool.

For the mental health and safety, and just plain old joy of representation, of our school children, please do not pass this bill. Thank you.

SB0948 Written Testimony Parental Rights in Educat

Uploaded by: Ayla Hurley

Position: UNF

Ayla Hurley
6385 Windharp Way
Columbia, MD 21045
District 13

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF SB0948, Children - Parental Rights - Educational Rights
2/18/2025

TO: Chair Feldman and the Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
FROM: Ayla Hurley

Chair Feldman and members of the committee, my name is Ayla Hurley and I've resided in Maryland my entire life. SB0948 is described as: “*Requiring each county board of education, in consultation with **certain individuals**, to develop and implement a **certain policy** to promote parental involvement in students' education; and establishing a complaint and appeals process for violations of a **certain policy**.*” Who are these “certain individuals” going to be? Will these be people who understand that representation of different ways of being is vital to childrens’ well-being and positive sense of self?

What is this “certain policy?” As written, this smacks of a way for restrictive bans promoted by limited minds to remove “woke” “DEI” materials - words that mean something, but not what their colloquial use has warped them into - from childrens’ ability to access them. But banning a book, or reading a book for that matter, does not *change* a child’s identity. Children have a right to their own education, and to see themselves, who they already are, reflected in their educational material. According to Heather Rose Artushin, LISW-CP (“Why Book Bans Are Bad for Mental Health,”

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/well-read/202405/why-book-bans-are-bad-for-mental-health>):

“Research supports that book bans are bad for mental health, especially impacting:

1. Marginalized individuals whose stories are contained in the majority of challenged books. Research shows that people of color are at a higher risk of facing mental health issues, and have increased barriers to accessing mental health treatment, due to institutional and interpersonal discrimination, stigma, and socioeconomic barriers (Williams DR., 2018). LGBTQIA+ individuals are nearly three times more likely to develop a mental health disorder, like depression or anxiety, and some studies indicate that nearly 45% of LGBTQIA+ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the last year (The Trevor Project, 2022). Banning books about the lived experiences and histories of marginalized groups of people only serve to increase feelings of exclusion and invisibility, and intensify their risk of mental health issues (Pickering, G., 2023).

2. Children and teens suffer when books are banned in their schools and public libraries for many reasons. As young people are in a developmental period of identity formation with a strong focus on peer relationships, banning diverse books robs them of the opportunity to have an open dialogue and engage in critical thinking in a safe, supportive environment (Pfeifer JH, Berkman ET., 2018). Youth are likely to seek information elsewhere, from unmonitored, unsafe sources, without the support of trusted adults.”

When these “certain policies” written by “certain individuals” cannot even be named in the legislation, that strikes me as disingenuous, and not the kind of vague language I want for children in Maryland to have to contend with. Parents already have options to opt-out of certain sensitive material due to religious objections, and this feels like a major stretch of that right. Parents who want to fully control their children’s educational material have every opportunity to homeschool.

For the mental health and safety, and just plain old joy of representation, of our school children, please do not pass this bill. Thank you.

Unfavorable Written Testimony on Senate Bill 948.p

Uploaded by: Brenda Myers

Position: UNF

Unfavorable Written Testimony on Senate Bill 948

To: The Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Brenda Myers

Date: 03/05/2025

Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 948 – "Children - Parental Rights - Educational Rights"

Honorable Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

I write today to express my **strong opposition** to Senate Bill 948, which mandates local boards of education to implement broad parental involvement policies, grants excessive parental control over instructional materials, and enforces restrictive regulations on student identity and participation. While parental engagement in education is important, this bill **raises serious constitutional concerns, creates unfunded mandates for local school systems, and jeopardizes student rights and privacy.**

1. SB 948 Raises Serious Constitutional Issues

The bill imposes **overbroad and vague restrictions** that conflict with **established First and Fourteenth Amendment protections**. The proposed parental opt-outs and restrictions on curriculum content could lead to unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination and content-based restrictions on speech. Courts have repeatedly ruled that **public education must be free from undue ideological interference** (*Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97 (1968)). By allowing broad curriculum opt-outs and withdrawal from clubs and extracurriculars, **this bill violates students' rights to a comprehensive education.**

Additionally, the provision requiring **parental consent before a student can use gender pronouns differing from their biological sex** infringes upon **equal protection rights and privacy protections** guaranteed under Maryland law. **Forcing students to conform to parental gender expectations contradicts established case law protecting students' rights to self-expression.**

2. SB 948 Places an Unfunded Mandate on Local School Systems

The fiscal note for this bill highlights **significant financial burdens on school districts.**

- **Frederick County Public Schools estimates costs exceeding \$6.5 million annually** due to additional administrative work and staffing required to comply with the law.
- **Anne Arundel County estimates at least \$40,000 just for website infrastructure** to manage parental inquiries and complaints.
- **St. Mary's and Wicomico Counties estimate at least \$130,000** to hire additional staff for implementation.

This bill imposes an **expensive and unnecessary bureaucratic burden** on already underfunded school systems, diverting resources from essential student services.

3. SB 948 Threatens the Integrity of Public Education

This legislation undermines **local control over curriculum** and opens the door to **selective censorship of instructional materials** based on individual parental objections rather than educational merit. **Public education should serve the collective good and ensure all students receive a well-rounded education, not cater to the ideological preferences of a vocal minority.**

By allowing parents to withdraw students from clubs, assemblies, and classroom content at will, this bill disrupts learning environments and **sets a dangerous precedent for politically motivated curriculum interference.**

4. SB 948 is a Solution in Search of a Problem

Maryland schools **already have** robust policies allowing parents to review instructional materials and opt-out of certain health-related topics. The Maryland State Department of Education provides transparency and clear policies for parental involvement without creating an administrative quagmire. **This bill is unnecessary and only serves to politicize education.**

Conclusion

SB 948 is a **deeply flawed** bill that would:

- **Violate constitutional protections** related to free speech, equal protection, and privacy.
- **Create significant financial burdens** for local school districts.
- **Undermine the integrity of public education** by prioritizing individual parental control over sound educational policy.
- **Impose unnecessary bureaucracy** where existing policies already ensure parental engagement.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE REPORT** on SB 948.

Respectfully Submitted,
Brenda Myers

Hampstead, Maryland

SB 948 - Children - Parental Rights - Educational

Uploaded by: Brian Dulay

Position: UNF

BILL: SENATE BILL 948
TITLE: Children – Parental Rights – Educational Rights
DATE: March 7, 2025
POSITION: UNFAVORABLE
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
CONTACT: Brian Dulay, MABE Government Relations Director
(bdulay@mabe.org)

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state’s local boards of education, opposes Senate Bill 948. As the voice of Maryland’s 24 local boards, MABE believes the principle of local governance by boards of education is fundamental to a sound system of public education. This bill imposes a series of local government mandates.

MABE recognizes and appreciates the intent of this legislation to involve parents in their students’ educational journeys. However, Senate Bill 948 outlines a drastic overreach of the established and professional responsibilities of educators, including: unchecked parental rights to remove their students from any unit of instruction in the classroom; parental examination of all curricula and instructional materials; and a new requirement for local school boards to appoint committees to oversee parental appeals.

MABE believes such considerations should reside with the local board and school system administration. For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 948.

SB0948 - Children - Parental Rights - Educational

Uploaded by: Charlotte Hoffman

Position: UNF



Charlotte Persephone Hoffman, Esq.
(they/she)
Policy Director
charlotte@transmaryland.org

Monday March 3, 2025

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Testimony of Trans Maryland

IN OPPOSITION TO

Senate Bill #948: Children - Parental Rights - Educational Rights

To the Chair, Vice Chair, and esteemed members of the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee:

Trans Maryland is a multi-racial, multi-gender community power building organization for Maryland's trans community. In that capacity we work with transgender young people all across the state, as well as their families, friends, and classmates. Since 2021, we have seen unprecedented attacks on trans youth across the country, at both the state and federal level. While Maryland has thus far resisted joining the bandwagon of anti-trans legislation, legislation like Senate Bill 948 demonstrates that not even Maryland is free from this wave of anti-trans rhetoric, which is too often framed through a false lens of "parents rights."

To be clear, Trans Maryland deeply understands the importance of supporting parents, and indeed, many of us at Trans Maryland are parents ourselves. In our capacity as advocates for transgender Marylanders, we frequently hear from transgender and queer parents whose families are not provided space in our society to thrive, as well as the parents of transgender youth who are struggling to help their children through a system that wasn't built for them. While you might think these are exactly the parents who would benefit from "parental rights," their families and children are instead the targets of a disingenuous legislative bait and switch.

At the end of the day, bills like SB948 are not designed to provide parents with tools to meet the specific needs of their children; they are instead designed to erase from the school curriculum all evidence that families like them exist.

While nominally framed as creating an individual right of parents to review school materials in advance and opt their children out of any lessons they find objectionable, the end result of Senate Bill 948 would be to drown teachers and school administrators with complaints about



Charlotte Persephone Hoffman, Esq.
(they/she)
Policy Director
charlotte@transmaryland.org

any content deemed “woke,” until the schools preemptively comply with the demands of the loudest voices.

And drown teachers will, for Senate Bill 948’s scheme is entirely unworkable, requiring teachers and schools to post lesson plans far in advance, rework units on the fly when parents object (for literally any reason), and struggle to figure out how to make classrooms inclusive of all students when exclusion is demanded by a critical mass of parents. With our teachers already overworked and underpaid, Senate Bill 948 would likely result in an exodus of our best teachers from the profession.

Even if Senate Bill 948 wouldn’t create an administrative burden so massive as to make education impossible, it would still be a poor policy choice for Maryland schools. Our students must be taught about the existence of trans and queer people to prevent harm, discrimination, and violence, as well as to learn about their fellow classmates, neighboring families, faculty, historical persons of note, and legislators in service of the betterment of our society. By discouraging the teaching of any content deemed objectionable by the most conservative members of our state, Senate Bill 948 would create schools where the only names mentioned are those of dead, straight, cisgender white men, and where those names are only ever mentioned in awe and reverence, never in critique.

Finally, Senate Bill 948 would contribute to an existing climate of discrimination and harassment in far too many of our schools. According to the GLSEN 2019 National School Climate Survey, 24% of Maryland’s LGBTQ youth surveyed had experienced physical harassment, 12% had experienced physical assault, and 67% had experienced verbal harassment. Instead of helping to erase this, Senate Bill 948 would instead encourage it by denying majority students the opportunity to learn about people unlike themselves and by denying marginalized students the ability to articulate their right to exist free of harassment and discrimination. At the end of the day, opting out of learning about the existence of queer and transgender people is a pathway to continued violence, and is fundamentally out of alignment with acknowledging the inherent dignity of transgender and queer youth and families.

For these reasons we urge an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 948.

Senate Bill 948 Unfavorable 2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Debi Jasen

Position: UNF

Education, Energy, and the Environment
Senate Bill 948
UNFAVORABLE

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee;

Please give Senate Bill 948, regarding "parental rights," an Unfavorable report.

As EVERYONE knows, this bill describes homeschooling. I hope you use this bill's hearing as an opportunity to use the restroom and grab a snack.

Sincerely,
Debi Jasen
Pasadena, MD

Trans Rights Advocacy Coalition - SB948 - UFAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Ericka McDonald

Position: UNF

Senate Bill 948
Children - Parental Rights - Educational Rights
March 7, 2025
Unfavorable

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee -

The Trans Rights Advocacy Coalition (TRAC) is a Maryland-led group of organizations, health care providers, and advocates seeking to improve the wellbeing of transgender Marylanders and ensure health equity across the state. TRAC has led legislative efforts to ensure the safety and well being of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders, including transgender students. Governor Moore's executive order declaring Maryland a Trans Sanctuary State, as well as bills providing and protecting gender affirming medical care, demonstrate clear support for the health and well being of transgender Marylanders.

TRAC strongly **opposes SB 948** which threatens the well being of transgender students by requiring forcible outing of transgender students, as well as the erasure of LGBTQIA+ youth from health education when requested by parents. Research shows that forced outings have demonstrable negative health effects on transgender youth, and that health education that is inclusive of gender identity and sexual orientation is beneficial for the well being of LGBTQIA+ and cisgender students.

Forced Outing

Schools are often safer spaces for transgender students, who make up 2% of the population of 13-17 year olds in Maryland.¹ Transgender students often elect to use chosen names and pronouns reflecting their gender identity at school before sharing this information at home. A 2022 survey by the Trevor Project found that 51% of trans youth considered school a safe space, while only 32% felt safe at home.²

HB 1385 requires schools to seek parental consent to use a transgender student's chosen pronouns, which would result in forced outing, or sharing a student's gender before they elect to do so. The forced outing in HB 1385 is contrary to federal privacy law that protects students' transgender status and gender assigned at birth.³

Forced outing also creates serious health risks for transgender students, who already disproportionately face discriminatory policies or practices at their schools.^{4,5} Transgender youth who disclose their gender identity face risk of rejection from the adults who are supposed to care for them, leading to increased

¹ [UCLA Williams Institute](#)

² [Trevor Project 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health](#)

³ [ACLU Student Rights](#)

⁴ [UCLA Williams Institute](#)

⁵ [GLSEN 2021 School Climate Study](#)

⁶ [Trevor Project 2024 National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People](#)



suicide risk and substance misuse.⁷ Transgender people are much more likely to suffer abuse based on their gender identity from their families.⁸ Familial abuse and rejection leads to transgender youth being disproportionately represented in foster care homes, juvenile detention centers, and homeless shelters.⁹¹⁰¹¹

Forcing students to hide their gender identities at school to protect themselves would also cause significant harm. A study in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* found that transgender students who are unable to use their preferred name and pronouns at school were 29% more likely to consider suicide and 56% more likely to exhibit suicidal behavior.¹²

Inclusive Health Education Censorship

SB 948 would also enable parents to opt their children out of health education that includes LGBTQIA+ people. Health curriculums that include gender identity and sexual orientation are well studied and proven to positively impact the lives of LGBTQIA+ students. For example, a study in the *Journal of School Nursing* found that sexual minority students who received decidedly heteronormative and exclusive sex education demonstrate higher levels of anxiety.¹³ Another study published in *Journal of Adolescent Health* shows that students in states with a greater proportion of LGBTQIA+ inclusive sex education have lower odds of experiencing school-based victimization and adverse mental health.

Additionally, leading medical organizations also support inclusive health education. For example, the American Medical Association Health Education policy urges schools at all education levels to implement comprehensive, developmentally appropriate sexuality education programs that appropriately and

⁷ [Family Rejection as a Predictor of Suicide Attempts and Substance Misuse Among Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Adults](#) Augustus Klein and Sarit A. Golub *LGBT Health* 2016 3:3, 193-199

⁸ ["Transgender Intimate Partner Violence and Gender Identity Abuse."](#) MedCentral, 22 Feb. 2022,

⁹ Trevor Project [Homelessness and Housing Insecurity Among LGBTQ Youth](#)

¹⁰ [UNJUST: LGBTQ Youth Incarcerated in the Juvenile Justice System](#)

¹¹ [Experiences and Well-Being of Sexual and Gender Diverse Youth in Foster Care in New York City](#)

¹² [Chosen Name Use Is Linked to Reduced Depressive Symptoms, Suicidal Ideation, and Suicidal Behavior Among Transgender Youth](#) Russell, Stephen T. et al. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, Volume 63, Issue 4, 503 - 505

¹³ Epps B, Markowski M, Cleaver K. [A Rapid Review and Narrative Synthesis of the Consequences of Non-Inclusive Sex Education in UK Schools on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Young People](#). *J Sch Nurs*. 2023 Feb;39(1):87-97.



comprehensively address the sexual behavior of all people, inclusive of sexual and gender minorities.¹⁴ The American Psychological Association advises that inclusive curriculums benefit all youth, including cisgender and straight students, improving school climates and healthy relationships for everyone.¹⁵

The hostile political environment created by the federal administration has rapidly worsened the discrimination against LGBTQIA+ students in Maryland. Forcibly outing transgender students would critically impact the health and well being of these vulnerable young Marylanders. It's essential for the health, well being, and academic success of LGBTQ+ students that they are protected and included in the health curriculum in Maryland. **The Trans Rights Advocacy Coalition strongly urges an unfavorable report on SB 948.**

¹⁴ [AMA Health Education Policy](#) (2024)

¹⁵ [APA statement on inclusive curriculum](#) American Psychological Association recommend LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum, including sex education.

Testimony Unfavorable to SB 948_.pdf

Uploaded by: Heather Borsum

Position: UNF

**Testimony Unfavorable to SB 948:
Children--Parental Rights--Educational Rights**

February 28, 2025

Senator Brian Feldman, Chair, Senator Cheryl Kagan, Vice-Chair, and esteemed members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Heather Borsum and I have been a resident of Maryland for most of my life. I am in my 28th year as a teacher in Montgomery County Public Schools; the past eleven of those years have been in high school. I have a frontline view of many issues that affect Maryland's students and that view leads me to ask for an unfavorable report on SB 948. Some of my students also oppose this bill and their stories will follow this letter.

High school is a time of growth, change, and exploration for all kids. Some of them are wrestling with feelings about their sexuality and gender. It is extremely difficult to come to terms with these ideas for yourself and then it is even more difficult to "out" yourselves to authority figures and ask for things such as a change in pronoun usage. Typically children agonize over the issue for months before mustering up the courage to tell their teachers. However, telling a teacher is often not the most difficult disclosure they have to make--discussing it with their families is. Some students (thankfully not all) face a home environment that is at best dismissive of their gender or sexuality issues and at worst is so unaccepting that it would be emotionally or physically dangerous for the child to confide in their family.

In those cases, the school can and should be a safe haven. Students cannot learn when they are worried about their safety and some kids would be at risk because of parts of SB 948. Perhaps they use pronouns at school that they are afraid to use at home, or perhaps they are part of a group or club that supports and uplifts them but they know their parents would disapprove.

Attached are stories from some of these kids in their own words. They were afraid to submit testimony under their own names so I am sharing them on their behalf. The fact that they are so afraid demonstrates how destructive this bill could be. I respectfully ask that you read their stories and that you report unfavorably on SB 948.

Thank you for your consideration,
Heather Borsum
Rockville, Maryland

Dear members of the Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and Environment committee, I am a high school junior in MCPS and a co-lead of my school's Pride Alliance. I urge you to oppose Senate Bill 0948.

My school's pride club has been an immensely important place for me and many of my friends to explore our own identities and form our own understanding of ourselves. The fact that it is a safe space, independent from any other groups at school, both outside of school and at home, makes it invaluable to many club members. Pride clubs are also very important in building community and helping members feel less alone. By providing a support system, other students can help answer questions, suggest solutions to issues people are facing, and simply be there as emotional support.

For me personally, the ability to go by pronouns at school that do not match my biological sex has been very important in discovering my identity and feeling seen. For many of my friends, their only option for exploring identities is at school. A classmate of mine in PE uses different pronouns at home and at school. By requiring parental permission, this bill would be denying my classmate the safe space they have found at school.

One of my closest friends told me that for her, the only options were either transition or suicide. The ability to independently socially transition at school and find support in community through extracurricular groups are of the utmost importance to her, to me, and to all queer students.

Dear members of the Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and Environment committee,

I am a senior at a public high school in Montgomery County, Maryland. I love creative writing, reading, and music, and as a trans and non-binary student, I urge you to oppose Senate Bill 0948.

For students outside the gender binary, school can be one of the only safe spaces for us to be ourselves. I'm lucky to have parents who support me as LGBTQ+, but I'm

taking my coming out process slow. If SB0948 passed, it would prevent me and other trans and non-binary students from expressing ourselves at our own pace. I don't know if I'm fully ready to come out to my parents, and I don't know if they're ready for that, either. In the meantime, school is a place for me to explore how it feels to be out and give me time to get used to it.

And not every student is that lucky. Not every student has supportive parents, and even fewer have parents that understand how complex gender can be. Please help to keep every LGBTQ+ student safe and let us come out when we're ready instead of when others think we should.

Thank you for your time, and I urge you again to vote against SB0948 and preserve all students' rights to be who they are, as privately or as publicly as they need to be.

Dear Members of the Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

My name is Alba. I am 15 and in my sophomore year of high school at a public school in Montgomery County, Maryland. I love science and Music and this is my sixth year taking choir. I participate in various extracurricular activities, such as the Biomedical club and one of the student-run acapella groups at my school. I am writing today to urge you to oppose Senate Bill 0948.

If Senate Bill 0948 had passed as a law merely one year ago, when I first started high school and was looking for clubs I would enjoy, I would not have been able to join the Pride Club at my school as my mum would have stopped me from attending. While my mum has come to terms with my queerness, it took a while for that to happen and her being able to hear from me what actually went on during pride club definitely helped her to accept me and the LGBTQ+ community. If my parents could have seen the extracurricular activities I was in and removed me from them, it would have taken much more time for her to come around to my queerness, continuing to strain our relationship. Many LGBTQ+ people are like my freshman self and don't have the most supportive parents, but having real examples of queer people would open their eyes and make

them more accepting. It is important for children to have a strong relationship with their parents, and having accepting parents is a necessary part of having a strong parent-child relationship.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this, and please, oppose Bill 0948.

Dear members of the Maryland Senate Education, Energy and Environment committee,

I am a teenager from a high school in Maryland. I'm on the way out, so much of what is about to be implemented will not directly affect me, but there are many in my school, and many more throughout my community who do not feel safe currently with the way things are.

I have siblings, friends, acquaintances, and overall know numerous people who are attempting to come to terms with an aspect of themselves that is difficult for anyone to talk to others about, especially parents due to the sense of uncertainty over to what extent that will be accepted.

So to that end, I'd implore you to reject this bill, with the knowledge that sending it out will no doubt cause lots of emotional and physical harm to people who will be unable to reconcile, discuss or truly embrace that side of themselves. I ask you this as a brother, as a friend, and just as someone who lives in this state.

Sincerely,

Anonymous Student

HB1385_SB948_ Children - Parental Rights - Educati

Uploaded by: Jeremy Browning

Position: UNF



Bill Title: Children - Parental Rights - Educational Rights

Bill Number(s): [HB1385/SB948](#)

Position: UNFAVORABLE

Date: March 3, 2025

Submitted by: Jeremy Browning, Director of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

To:

House Ways and Means Committee

The Hon. Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair
The Hon. Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Vice Chair

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

The Hon. Brian J. Feldman, Chair
The Hon. Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair

Testimony on behalf of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs:

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, created by the Maryland General Assembly, works to serve LGBTQIA+ Marylanders by galvanizing community voices, researching and addressing challenges, and advocating for policies that advance equity and inclusion. The Commission envisions a Maryland where all LGBTQIA+ people can live full and authentic lives. As a vital resource, the Commission collaborates with public officials, agencies, and community partners to ensure the rights and dignity of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders are protected and respected.

The Commission strongly opposes HB1385 and SB948. While we recognize the importance of parental involvement in education, this bill introduces provisions that would harm LGBTQIA+ students by restricting their ability to express themselves safely in schools. Research consistently shows that LGBTQIA+ students already face disproportionate levels of bullying, harassment, and mental health challenges in school settings. Reports such as the [2021 GLSEN National School Climate Survey](#) and the [GLSEN 2021 Maryland State Snapshot](#) confirm that many LGBTQIA+ students in Maryland encounter hostile environments that contribute to higher rates of absenteeism, lower academic performance, and increased suicide risk.

A particularly dangerous provision in this bill mandates that schools obtain parental consent before a student can use gender pronouns that do not align with their assigned sex at birth. This requirement fails to consider the reality that not all students have supportive parents. For many

transgender and nonbinary youth, being forcibly outed at school could lead to rejection, emotional or physical abuse, and even homelessness.

[The Trevor Project's 2023 National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People](#)

analyzed the experiences of more than 28,000 LGBTQ young people ages 13 to 24 across the United States. Key findings include:

- Nearly 2 in 3 LGBTQ young people said that hearing about potential state or local laws banning people from discussing LGBTQ people at school made their mental health a lot worse.
- A majority of LGBTQ young people reported being verbally harassed at school because people thought they were LGBTQ.
- 41% of LGBTQ young people seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year.
- Roughly half of transgender and nonbinary young people found their school to be gender-affirming, and those who did reported lower rates of attempting suicide.
- Fewer than 40% of LGBTQ young people found their home to be LGBTQ-affirming.
- 24% of LGBTQ young people and 27% of transgender and nonbinary young people reported that they have been physically threatened or harmed in the past year due to their gender identity.

In addition to the risks of forced disclosure, this bill's broad parental opt-out provisions for school clubs, instructional materials, and presentations open the door to censorship of LGBTQIA+ content. LGBTQIA+ students deserve to see themselves reflected in their education, and policies like these disproportionately harm students from marginalized backgrounds by restricting their access to affirming and inclusive learning environments.

Further, HB1385/SB948 place an undue burden on educators by requiring them to disclose information about students' mental health, extracurricular involvement, and other personal matters to parents, regardless of whether doing so is in the best interest of the student. Schools should be places where students feel safe to seek support, not environments where they fear being exposed without their consent.

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs urges the legislature to reject this bill. Schools must be safe and affirming spaces where all students can learn and thrive without fear of discrimination or forced disclosure. HB1385 and SB948 fail to balance parental involvement with student well-being, instead creating a framework that could harm Maryland's most vulnerable youth. For these reasons, we strongly urge an unfavorable report on HB1385 and SB948 .

References:

GLSEN. (2022). *The 2021 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of LGBTQ+ youth in our nation's schools*. Retrieved from <https://www.glsen.org/research/2021-national-school-climate-survey>

GLSEN. (2023, February). *2021 National School Climate Survey: Maryland State Snapshot*. Retrieved from https://maps.glsen.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/GLSEN_2021_NSCS_State_Snapshots_MD.pdf

The Trevor Project. (2023). *The 2023 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People*. Retrieved from https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2023/assets/static/05_TREVOR05_2023survey.pdf

SB0948_MaraGreengrass_UNFAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Mara Greengrass

Position: UNF

March 7, 2025

Mara R. Greengrass
Rockville, MD 20852

TESTIMONY ON SB0948 - POSITION: UNFAVORABLE
Children - Parental Rights - Educational Rights

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: Mara Greengrass

My name is Mara Greengrass. I'm a resident of District 18 and I'm submitting this testimony in opposition to SB0948, which would harm children, families, and our educational system.

As an extremely involved parent, I hope that you will see the dangers inherent in this bill. Under the guise of "parental rights", the sponsor wants to remove the rights of children to an expansive education, remove the rights of parents like me to ensure our children are properly educated, and destroy our amazing public schools.

Students don't live in a bubble and they certainly won't live in one after they graduate. Especially when it comes to middle and high school students, it's unconscionable that we would prevent them from joining clubs and school activities just because their parents said so.

This bill would also create an extreme burden on already overloaded school systems. Anyone who thinks it's easy to provide "all curricula and instructional materials" for each student has never been in a classroom or spoken to a teacher. Instructional materials change depending on many factors, including current events, substitute teachers, weather delays, or children moving between reading groups. Each child would need an individual list that would have to be updated regularly. When do teachers have time to do that?

Lastly, this bill is an attempt to censor schools, to make educators so afraid of upsetting parents that they're unwilling or unable to teach about anything that might be considered controversial by anyone in their community. Section IV's requirement of parental consent to use a child's correct pronouns is the dead giveaway, because that has nothing to do with parental rights. If my son wants to be called "George of the Jungle" in school, that's between them and their teacher.

If we truly want to protect our children, we will respect their right to some privacy rather than worrying that they might learn something about people unlike themselves. **I respectfully urge this committee to return an unfavorable report on SB0948.**

PARENTAL RIGHTS PFLAG 2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Nicole Hollywood

Position: UNF



LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: **HB135/SB948 Family Law- Fundamental Parental Rights**

Organization: PFLAG Salisbury Inc., PO Box 5107, Salisbury Maryland 21802

Submitted by: Nicole Hollywood, Board Member

Position: **OPPOSE**

I am submitting this testimony in **OPPOSITION** to SB566/HB666 on behalf of PFLAG Salisbury, the Salisbury, Maryland Chapter of PFLAG National.

At Salisbury PFLAG, we recognize that a robust education builds knowledge and extends perspective. This means that students need to both be able to see themselves in what they're reading and studying as reflection of themselves and their histories, but they also must be encouraged to see outwards and consider perspectives and experiences different from their own. We also know that exposing learners to only limited and skewed versions of history, health, or literature that neglect entire populations using insular and homogenous materials forces them to develop a skewed inaccurate version of the diversity of our society. This is problematic for underrepresented groups – particularly LGBTQIA+ students and students of color and the result is the creation of a hostile and unsupportive educational climate that research shows contribute to lower academic performance, lower GPA, increased absences, increased likelihood of school dropout, and less likelihood of attending an institution of higher.

For many children K-12 schools are safe spaces from homes that are often unaffirming. Places where they can seek support for their mental and emotional health and deal with issues that impact many young people. While so called "parental rights" proposals are promoted as given parents greater control over their children's education, they are in actually purposed to target and erase historically marginalized groups.

When parents work to support teachers and schools the result enhances learner outcomes but, this bill does not seek to strengthen and support our educators. Rather, it seeks to promote parent involvement as a means to undermine educators' professional judgments, bully teachers, and advance narrow self-serving narratives. Should this bill pass, it will drive a chasm creating a wedge between parents and the education community that will lead to many highly qualified teachers exiting the profession.

Emboldening close-minded people with the opportunity to object to curriculum, programming, activities, and materials, , use of preferred pronouns, accurate health information, lessons, and digital media based on beliefs about morality, religion, personal philosophy, or political ideology is dangerous and only promotes intolerance and tunnel vision. Accordingly, Salisbury PFLAG opposes this bill and recommends an UNFAVORABLE report in committee.

Final Testimony of Family Law Profs - SB 948.pdf

Uploaded by: Shanta Trivedi

Position: UNF

Oppose SB 948

Children – Parental Rights – Educational Rights

Testimony of Family Law Professors

March, 3 2025

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

We are law professors at the University of Baltimore School of Law and the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law, the only two law schools in the state of Maryland. Margaret E. Johnson is a Professor of Law, Director of the Bronfein Family Law Clinic and Co-Director of the Center on Applied Feminism and Shanta Trivedi is an Assistant Professor of Law and Faculty Director of the Sayra & Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families, Children and the Courts at the University of Baltimore. Leigh Goodmark is the Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development and Marjorie Cook Professor of Law and directs the Gender, Prison, and Trauma Clinic and Sarah H. Lorr is an Associate Professor at the University of Maryland Carey School of Law.

We all teach and write about family law, which includes the constitutional rights of parents. Some of us also teach about children’s rights, disability, and anti-discrimination law and do clinical work with transgender individuals. We write to provide context and information about the scope of parental rights under current constitutional law as well as the discriminatory nature of this bill’s significant deviation from that scope. We also explain the rights of minors under Maryland law. **We urge an unfavorable report on SB 948 because we believe this bill exceeds the limits of the fundamental right to parent, reduces the important role of the state in educating children in a pluralistic society, is against Maryland’s public policy, would permit gender and sex discrimination, and will ultimately be harmful to children.**

1. This Bill Incorrectly Defines the Constitutional Rights of Parents

Undoubtedly, much of the support for this bill is based on the Supreme Court cases that establish that parents have a fundamental right to the care, custody and control of their children. It is critical then to understand the rules of law that these cases establish, in addition to the limits they impose.

The Supreme Court has held that parents can make educational decisions for their own child but cannot decide what they want other children to learn and impose that on a school. In *Meyer v. Nebraska*, a German teacher at a parochial school was convicted of violating a law that prohibited teaching any language other than English.¹ While this case was not brought by parents, in finding the law unconstitutional, the Supreme Court said that the teacher’s right “to teach and the right of parents to engage him so to instruct their children, we think, are within the liberty of the [14th] Amendment.”² Importantly, the Court noted that “the legislature has attempted materially to interfere with the calling of modern language teachers, with the opportunities of pupils to acquire knowledge, and with the power of parents to control the education of *their own*.”³ *Meyer* therefore stands for the proposition that parents can decide that they want their children to learn German and can hire someone to teach them. *Meyer* does not, however, stand for the proposition that parents can impose upon their child’s school the obligation to teach German to their child or other children, especially when so doing would interfere with the opportunities of other students to “acquire knowledge.”

¹ *Meyer v. Nebraska*, 262 U.S. 390, 396–97 (1923).

² *Id.* at 400.

³ *Id.* at 401 (emphasis added).

The Supreme Court, recognizing the state's role in directing students' education, has also held that a parent may direct what type of school their child may attend, but cannot do so for others' children. In *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, Oregon passed a law that required all students to go to public school.⁴ A military academy and a Catholic school sued the state because they believed the law effectively meant they would cease to exist. In ruling in favor of the schools, the Supreme Court noted that, based on *Meyer*, this law:

[U]nreasonably interferes with the liberty of parents and guardians to direct the upbringing and education of children under their control...The fundamental theory of liberty upon which all governments in this Union repose excludes any general power of the state to standardize its children by forcing them to accept instruction from public teachers only. The child is not the mere creature of the state; those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty, to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations.⁵

Pierce held that a state cannot force a parent to send their child to a particular type of school and that parents have the right to "direct the upbringing and education of children *under their control*."⁶ That is, while *Pierce* makes clear that a parent can decide what type of school their child goes to, it does not support the proposition that a parent can mandate that other children attend military or religious schools.

Finally, in *Prince v. Massachusetts*, an aunt who was the guardian of her niece was convicted of violating a child labor law (among other things) after her 9-year-old niece went with her at night to distribute copies of a religious magazine.⁷ The Court noted that:

It is cardinal with us that the custody, care and nurture of the child reside first in the parents, whose primary function and freedom include preparation for obligations the state can neither supply nor hinder. And it is in recognition of this that these decisions have respected the private realm of family life which the state cannot enter.⁸

Despite this language, however, the Court held that the state has authority over children's activities that is not necessarily subordinate to the parents' authority under certain circumstances relating to a child's well-being. Based on this principle, the Court ruled *against* the guardian in this case because the rights of parents and caregivers are not without limitation and the state has its own role to play in a child's upbringing. The Court explained that "[the state's] authority is not nullified merely because the parent grounds his claim to control the child's course of conduct on religion or conscience."⁹ Further, it stated that:

The state's authority over children's activities is broader than over like actions of adults. This is peculiarly true of public activities and matters of employment. A democratic society rests, for its continuance, upon the healthy, well-rounded growth of young people into full maturity as citizens, with all that implies. It may secure this against impeding restraints and dangers, within a broad range of selection.¹⁰

Thus, while parents are certainly free and even encouraged to make choices about their own children's education, such decisions cannot harm the child, and they are not entitled to make educational choices for all children in their school district. The state, through its public schools, stands *in loco parentis*, that is, as

⁴ *Pierce v. Society of Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary*, 268 U.S. 510, 530 (1925).

⁵ *Id.* at 534–35 (citing *Meyer*, 262 U.S. at 400–01).

⁶ *Id.* (emphasis added).

⁷ *Prince v. Massachusetts*, 321 U.S. 158, 159–60 (1944).

⁸ *Id.* at 166 (citing *Pierce*, 268 U.S. at 534–35).

⁹ *Id.* at 167.

¹⁰ *Id.* at 168.

substitute parents, while children are at school and therefore, education personnel are entitled to discretion in determining what curriculum best serves the student population. Parents may work with the school, join the school board, attend PTA meetings, and have conversations with teachers and school administrations to register their objections to school curriculum and policy. SB 948, however, would disrupt the balance between the role of parents and the state as it pertains to educating our children.

2. This Bill Goes Against Maryland Public Policy that Prioritizes Children’s Autonomy

Under certain, limited circumstances, the State of Maryland has recognized that children need to be free to seek care without interference from their parents because of the harm that would be done if parents intervened. Adolescents, for example, are free to discuss reproductive and mental health issues with their physicians without parental interference. This legislature has explicitly granted children rights in areas of importance that were long ago reserved to their parents. Children whose parents deny or denigrate their gender identities should be similarly free to determine for themselves how they would like to be addressed.

For example, parents generally have medical decision-making authority over their children’s mental health. In Maryland, however, youth who are “12 years old or older who is determined by a health care provider to be mature and capable of giving informed consent has the same capacity as an adult to consent to consultation, diagnosis, and treatment of a mental or emotional disorder” by a physician, psychologist, or a clinic.¹¹ Further, like school personnel, when a minor in a provider’s care does not consent to or objects to their health care provider sharing the minor’s health information with their parent or caregiver, providers are allowed to, *but are not required*, provide parents or other caregivers with information about the minor’s treatment..¹²

Similarly, all minors, regardless of age, have the same capacity as adults to consent to treatment for venereal disease, alcohol and drug abuse, and related to pregnancy.¹³ In these instances, medical providers may, but need not, reveal any information about this treatment to the young person’s parents without their consent or over their objection.¹⁴

In the context of abortion, the legislature permits unmarried minors to access abortion care based on the physician’s expertise.¹⁵ In these cases, a physician may perform an abortion on an unmarried minor without notice to the minor’s parents if the physician determines that:

- (i) Notice to the parent or guardian may lead to physical or emotional abuse of the minor;
- (ii) The minor is mature and capable of giving informed consent to an abortion; or
- (iii) Notification would not be in the best interest of the minor.¹⁶

Notably, there is no age requirement in this provision. This permission is an exception to the legislature’s general provision that a physician may not perform an abortion on an unmarried minor unless the physician first gives notice to a parent or guardian of the minor.¹⁷

The Supreme Court has recognized the importance of minors’ access to professionals to discuss important decisions. The above laws permit independent decision-making by minors separate from their parents. These laws address situations in which young people need to make decisions that are deeply personal. In the words of the Supreme Court, “[u]nder the Constitution, the State can ‘properly conclude that parents and others, teachers

¹¹ Md. Code Ann., Health-Gen. § 20-104(b)(1) (West 2024).

¹² *Id.* at (c)(1).

¹³ Md. Code Ann., Health-Gen. § 20-102(c)(1)–(4) (West 2024).

¹⁴ *Id.* at (f).

¹⁵ Md. Code Ann., Health-Gen. § 20-103(d)(1) (West 2024).

¹⁶ Md. Code Ann., Health-Gen. § 20-103(d)(1) (West 2024).

¹⁷ *Id.* at (b).

for example, who have [the] primary responsibility for children's well-being are entitled to the support of laws designed to aid discharge of that responsibility.”¹⁸

3. This Bill Would Hinder Development of the State’s Citizens and Permit Unconstitutional Gender and Sex Discrimination

Under this proposed legislation, parents would be able to direct a school not to call a student by their preferred pronouns. This provision targets transgender children; there is no history of which the authors are aware where a parent has disagreed with a student’s choice of pronouns when that student chooses pronouns that agree with the sex assigned at birth. SB948 disregards the expertise of educators and the role of the state in ensuring students are educated to fulfill their role as citizens of Maryland, a state that is home to people of all religions, cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender identities, and belief systems. This bill would permit parents to interfere in educators’ work in the day-to-day business of school education if the parent disagrees with the student’s choice of pronouns only when they are different from their sex assigned at birth.

Accordingly, this bill would not affect the boy (assigned the male sex at birth) who wants to be called he/him but it will affect the child (assigned female sex at birth) who wants to be called he/him. This is sex discrimination: one child is being treated differently from another because of their sex and gender. In addition, the bill discriminates on the basis of gender by targeting those students whose gender identification and pronouns differ from their sex assigned at birth. Under Maryland’s regulations, all public school students, regardless of gender and sexual orientation, have the right to educational environments that are safe, appropriate for academic achievement, and free from harassment.¹⁹ This bill jeopardizes those rights. Supporting transgender individuals by accepting their gender identity and using the pronouns they request is important to their health, safety, and learning.²⁰

Finally, this bill could violate federal anti-discrimination law regarding educational programming, such as Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which precludes discrimination on the basis of sex, and drawing from Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, precludes discrimination on the basis of gender identity, despite the Trump Administration’s recent Executive Orders.²¹

For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable report on SB 948.

¹⁸ See *Bellotti v. Baird*, 443 U.S. 622, 639 (1979) (quoting *Ginsberg v. New York*, 390 U.S. 629, 639 (1968)).

¹⁹ COMAR 13A.01.04.03.

²⁰ Harper Seldin, *Trans Students Should Be Treated with Dignity, Not Outed by Their Schools*, ACLU, Jan. 26, 2023, <https://www.aclu.org/news/lgbtq-rights/trans-students-should-be-treated-with-dignity-not-outed-by-their-schools> (citing research studies therein).

²¹ Compare Education Amendments Act of 1972, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681–1688 (prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs and activities), and Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000e–2000e-17 (prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex in hiring and employment), and *Bostock v. Clayton County*, 590 U.S. 644, 651–52 (2020) (holding that under Title VII, discrimination on the basis of sex includes discrimination on the basis of gender identity), with Exec. Order No. 14168, 90 Fed. Reg. 8615 (Jan. 20, 2025) (prohibiting Executive Agencies from recognizing a person’s gender identity if it does not align with sex-assigned at birth), and Exec. Order No. 14190, 90 Fed. Reg. 8853 (Feb. 3, 2025) (directing members of the Cabinet to provide policy advice to eliminate federal funding and to K-12 schools that affirm students’ gender identity), and Exec. Order No. 14201, 90 Fed. Reg. 9279 (Feb. 5, 2025) (directing the Secretary of Education, Attorney General, Secretary of State, and leaders of private entities governing sports to prohibit transgender individuals from participation in women’s sports). Transgender minors and their parents are challenging Executive Orders 14168 and 14201. See *Litigation Tracker: Legal Challenges to Trump Administration Actions*, JUST SECURITY, <https://www.justsecurity.org/107087/tracker-litigation-legal-challenges-trump-administration/> (last visited Jan. 28, 2025).