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TESTIMONY ON HB#0495 – FAVORABLE

Education - Antidiscrimination Policies - Policy and Notice Requirements

TO: Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins and members of the Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0495, Education - Antidiscrimination Policies - Policy and Notice Requirements

“Discrimination is a human rights violation which can have a damaging effect on all learners, especially those who are targeted. Schools can tackle discrimination by promoting democracy, respect for human rights and citizenship.

To ensure that all students’ needs are met equally, **schools need to prioritize language and cultural competences, multi perspectivity in history and gender equality**. In this way, students can acquire competences for democratic culture, to fulfil their potential in school as well as in society.”¹

As the Supreme Court said in [*Brown v. Board of Education*](#), education “is the very foundation of good citizenship.” Through education, young people learn important values about our culture and democratic society, and about their own values and relationships to others in this society. In addition to being an important foundation for kids’ and young adults’ future professional success, education allows individuals to be informed voters and participants in democratic processes, and public education is the first experience most people will have with the government.

For all these reasons, equity in education is a critical foundation for a democratic society in which people of all backgrounds are equally included. Without equal opportunities to obtain an education, they will not be able to participate equally in jobs, in voting, and in other crucial areas of life. And when students are not able to learn together, this harms their ability to work together and live and engage with one another later in life.²

¹ https://www.coe.int/en/web/campaign-free-to-speak-safe-to-learn/tackling-discrimination/-/asset_publisher/4a3esYbkstv9/content/improving-well-being-at-school

² <https://www.aclu.org/news/racial-justice/why-access-to-education-is-key-to-systemic-equality>

The focus of this bill is to address discrimination in education with remedies that may assist in prevention of that conduct.

This bill requires certain schools that have an antidiscrimination policy to ensure that the policy includes certain information and is available to certain individuals in a certain manner. A framework is created for the content of that policy and how it is communicated to those who are affected by or involved in access to it. The bill would ensure that a school provides a certain training regarding anti-discrimination policies to students and employees in a certain manner. People who interact with these policies need to have the knowledge to effectively implement and utilize it. This bill also requires, if sufficient resources are not available to provide training, a school to coordinate with a community organization with certain expertise to provide the training to students and employees at no cost.

With the Federal Government seeking to stamp out diversity, equity and inclusion policies Maryland can and should make a positive statement that discrimination will not occur in Maryland education settings. Maryland will truly live the value that we, in the words of Governor Moore, “leave no one behind”.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report and pass HB0495.