

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 0068, the “Student Protection Act of 2025” sponsored by Delegate Mangione. This bill is a necessary and proactive measure to ensure the safety and well-being of our students and school staff by addressing the presence of individuals who may pose a threat to the learning environment.

The horrific murder of Kayla Hamilton has tragically brought to light the urgent need for stronger safeguards in our schools. Kayla’s murderer was an alleged gang member with a history of extreme violence, including—by his own admission—four murders and two sexual assaults. Despite this alarming background, he was allowed to attend school in person while investigators awaited DNA results, a process that took five months. This devastating failure of our system placed countless innocent students and staff at risk and underscores why immediate action is necessary to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.

HB 0068 proposes to prohibit students suspected of violent crimes from attending school in person. This is a commonsense approach that prioritizes the safety of the entire school community while still respecting due process. While every student has the right to education, we must acknowledge the pressing need to protect others from potential harm and disruption. Schools should be a place where students and staff feel safe and supported—free from fear and distraction.

As a concerned community member, I believe this legislation is critical in fostering a secure environment where students can focus on their education without worry. It is imperative that we take swift action when safety concerns arise, rather than waiting for incidents to escalate. This bill allows schools to act responsibly and take precautionary measures that protect everyone on school grounds.

I understand the importance of fairness in implementing this law, ensuring that decisions are made based on clear and consistent criteria. However, the overarching goal must remain the same, keeping our schools safe and prioritizing the well-being of our children and educators.

I respectfully urge you to support HB 0068 and work toward its passage to strengthen our commitment to school safety. Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue.

Thank you,

Jill Ferrara