

**HB0495**  
**Education - Antidiscrimination Policies - Policy and Notice Requirements**  
**February 12, 2025**  
**Position: Favorable**

Esteemed Chairs Atterbeary and Barnes, Vice Chairs Wilkins and Chang, and members of the Ways and Means and Appropriations Committees, my name is Amy Isler. I am a former high school English teacher in Baltimore County Public Schools, mother of two children, and a constituent of Maryland District 44A. **I support HB0495, Education–Antidiscrimination Policies - Policy and Notice Requirements.**

As a former teacher and as a mom, I am constantly second guessing the job I'm doing to make home and school safe, not just for my kids, but for all kids. It has been and will continue to be hard to be a teenager until schools and parents partner to put civility and respect into our antidiscrimination policy, and back it up with supports so that it has some teeth. BCPS has always said it has a zero tolerance for bullying, as long as I worked there, and as long as my kids have attended these schools. This policy puts the onus on the victim to do the work of re-victimizing themselves, potentially encouraging their bullies' retribution, in order to see change. When my kids come home from high school at the end of the school day, there is always—and I mean every single day—a story of outrage related to words spoken by classmates that I would classify as hate speech. When we were kids we said these words as “jokes” and they were not funny then. They still aren't funny. I'm hearing constant reference to slurs used as “jokes” because while some of us got the memo that these words hurt people, there are plenty of households out there where kids are hearing the opposite. Unless schools and parents partner to encourage civil discourse, backed by antidiscrimination policy, high school will remain an unsafe breeding ground for hate speech and bullying. Maryland has a real opportunity to become the sanctuary it has touted itself to be. In order to accomplish this goal, legislation, the courts, and the people need to work together to protect our marginalized siblings, especially in schools.

For these reasons, **I urge a favorable report on HB0495. Thank you.**