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03/03/2025

The Honorable Members of the House Committee

Maryland General Assembly, Annapolis, MD 21401

Testimony in Support of House Bill 1313 (HB1313) with Amendments - Education - Student Behavior - Parent and Guardian Notice and Required Counseling (Parent and Guardian Accountability Act)

Hearing Date: March 05, 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 am testifying today in **strong support with amendments** of House Bill 1313, the Parent and Guardian Accountability Act. This bill is an essential step toward fostering safer, more productive learning environments by ensuring that parents and guardians take an active role in addressing persistent student behavioral issues.

Why This Bill Is Necessary:

Encourages Parental Involvement – Schools cannot tackle student behavior issues alone. This bill ensures that parents and guardians are actively engaged when their child exhibits repeated violent or disruptive behavior.

Creates a Safer Learning Environment – By mandating parental participation in counseling, the bill promotes early intervention, reducing the risk of continued behavioral issues that could harm other students and disrupt classrooms.

Supports Students in Need – Mandatory counseling provides both the student and their guardian with professional resources to address underlying behavioral challenges, whether emotional, social, or psychological.

Reduces Strain on Educators and Schools – Teachers and school staff already manage multiple responsibilities. This bill ensures that schools and families work together to create solutions, rather than leaving educators to handle disciplinary matters alone.

Suggested Enhancements:

While I fully support HB1313, I propose the following amendments to ensure its effectiveness:

Provide State-Funded or Low-Cost Counseling Options – To ensure accessibility, the state should offer free or subsidized counseling services for families who may struggle with the financial burden of private counseling.

Introduce a Gradual Intervention Process – Before legal consequences are enforced, schools should offer a tiered system of intervention, such as parent-teacher conferences and school-based counseling, before escalating to mandated external counseling.

HB1313 strikes a critical balance between accountability and support, ensuring that schools, families, and communities work together to foster safe, respectful, and productive educational environments. I urge this committee to pass HB1313 with necessary amendments to ensure that all families, regardless of financial status, can comply with the bill's requirements and contribute to a better learning environment for all students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Wambui