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TESTIMONY ON HB#/0137- POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Public Schools - Children Charged with a Crime of Violence - Prohibition on In-Person Attendance (School Safety Act of 2025)

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

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support with amendments of HB#/0137, Public Schools - Children Charged with a Crime of Violence - Prohibition on In-Person Attendance (School Safety Act of 2025)

This bill is submitted to insure that Maryland schools do not repeat the mistake Loudoun County, Virginia schools made when a person who committed a sexual assault at a high school was permitted to attend a different high school where a second sexual assault then occurred.

As reported by WTOP news *Report: Where Loudoun Co. schools fell short in handling of sexual assaults by same student*¹

“Loudoun County schools, according to the report, also should have conducted a threat assessment of the student responsible after the first assault. The same student was involved in a second incident at Broad Run High School later on Oct. 6, 2021. They have since been charged and convicted in both cases.”

The intent of this bill is to provide safe schools for every student by prohibiting a child from in-person attendance at a public school if the child has been charged with a crime of violence, until the child is found not delinquent or the charge is dismissed. It will mandate each local school system to provide alternative educational options for children prohibited from in-person attendance in a certain manner. Until any violent incident is adjudicated the local school systems will err on the side of caution by removing that student from direct contact with other students attending that school.

I would urge an amendment that takes into account the age, maturity level, and any Individualized Education Plan of the accused student and permits flexibility of action based on those factors. A special needs child who hits another child could, in some cases, be subject to a police action that would cause this policy to be invoked rather than providing mental health resources as the first action taken before separation from the in person school attendance.

¹ <https://wtop.com/loudoun-county/2023/09/report-where-loudoun-co-schools-fell-short-in-handling-of-sexual-assaults-by-same-student/>

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable with amendments report on HB#/0137.