



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: House Bill 608: Primary and Secondary Education - Student Immunization - Temporary Admission Period

SPONSORS: Delegates Kim Taylor, Amprey, Boafo, Conaway, Crutchfield, Fennell, Harris, Harrison, Lehman, J. Long, Martinez, Ruff, Simpson, Taveras, Wells, Williams, and Woods

HEARING DATE: February 12, 2025 at 1:00PM

COMMITTEE: Ways and Means

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION:	SUPPORT
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The office of the Acting Prince George's County Executive urges **SUPPORT** of **House Bill 608: Primary and Secondary Education - Student Immunization - Temporary Admission Period**, requiring the extension of temporary admission to schools for a specified time frame if the parent or guardian of a student is unable to provide proof of immunization under certain circumstances. As written, the bill acknowledges the scale of the difficulty faced by certain families, addresses a critical source of potential revenue loss faced by the school system, and emphasizes social and emotional impact of keeping children and their families engaged in education through administrative difficulties.

With 132,854 students enrolled as of the September 30, 2024, Prince George's County Public School ranks as one of the largest school districts in the nation and stands as the second largest school district in Maryland. Each year, an average of 4,000 newcomer students and their parents choose to begin the journey to their American dream through an education at our public schools. As many of you know or even experienced, these families can come from any corner the world, each arriving with their own unique stories and situations, often describing the very difficult realities encountered through their individualized and sometimes tumultuous resettlement processes, rendering meeting strict immunization record requirements an extreme difficulty for many. But this administration believes that these families, too, deserve access to life-changing education, and that as written,

the changes proposed by this bill attest to the acknowledgement of these sobering truths.

Further, the exclusion resulting from not meeting the immunization requirements by the current deadline, means that students who do eventually attend school later that year, are not counted and funded as part of the Foundation Program—the main program in general education aid, providing per pupil funding aid to teach jurisdiction based on enrollment. Each year, this barrier results in millions of dollars of lost financial aid. As you are very aware, the financial pressures currently being placed on our schools by factors ranging from inconsistent policy guidance from the federal government to our very own state structural deficit, makes the need for fixes like the one proposed critical in continuing to provide a world-class education to every student who walks through the doors of our public school system.

Attending and being engaged in the school community is critical to the social and emotional development in many lives, but especially for our “newcomer” students. We know that early engagement builds essential knowledge and skills that form the foundation for future academic and career success. Therefore, the lack of attendance created by this barrier carries the strong potential of adverse impact on these students’ success and achievement in school. This administration understands the importance of the immunization program when considering public health. However, the administration also believes that the current timeline does not take into property account the realities faced by our very special student and family population and their needs. We hope giving families additional time to access vaccines will help children to stay and successfully ***complete*** school.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George’s County Executive **SUPPORTS HB 608** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.