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of Howard County**

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**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House of Delegates,
Ways and Means Committee
March 26, 2025**

SB0770: INFORMATIONAL ONLY

Public Schools and Youth Services - Crisis Support and Assistance and Workgroup Study

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) would like to provide this Committee information regarding amendments made by the Senate as you consider **Public Schools and Youth Services - Crisis Support and Assistance and Workgroup Study**. As introduced, the Board supported SB0770 with amendments to address timing of review of applicants who had direct contact with minors. Before passage by the Senate, however, SB0770 was rewritten as the bill you have before you today to implement crisis management teams. As staff has quickly reviewed the new provisions, we would like this Committee to consider the following:

- In regard to lines 22-26 on page 2
 - If this is intended to cover each and every time a teacher/staff member is removed, there are often instances of unfounded allegations with some staff returning the next day or soon after
 - What would constitute “for student safety”?
- In regard to lines 30-33 on page 2
 - Not all school systems have in-house legal counsel
 - Although the next line indicates it is the intent of the General Assembly that school systems use existing resources to establish crisis response teams, the above questions about the scope of a “crisis” would be pertinent to understanding the actual fiscal and operational impact of this mandate
- In regard to lines 6-28 on page 3
 - Requiring communications and specific resources to be provided in all cases of a teacher/staff removal could alert students (beyond those who may be directly involved in the incident) and the community to details of an allegation which are unfounded and still under investigation
 - Removal of a teacher/staff member is a personnel matter and therefore there are implications for commenting on ongoing legal matters, often requiring limited information to be provided publicly
 - Especially given the above, communications about a teacher/staff member removal are currently addressed on a case-by-case basis to account for varying factors
- In regard to lines 6-7 on page 4
 - Staff is unsure what is meant by “the placement of impacted students in spaces in the school that minimizes trauma”
- In regard to the bill as a whole
 - Given the overall intent of this bill is to ensure school systems have a response plan in place for potentially traumatic incidents, and to ensure stakeholders are aware of incidents that may impact the school community, a necessity for crisis communications planning may more naturally fit within existing school emergency plans

Related to the workgroup study on the original components of SB0770, the Board offered the following amendments to the original bill which may guide areas to study should this Committee move that portion of the bill forward:

The current HB486 check takes up to 20 days from the time staff receives a recommendation for hire to the time staff can send onboarding information to a candidate for a school-based position and is contingent on the candidate initiating their forms. SB0770/HB1105 must ensure new provisions do not increase the length of this hiring process. The bill requires the applicant to submit their notarized form through myDHR web portal. Additionally, the employer must request a child protective services background clearance from the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS). As an amendment, staff asks that the bill specify the length of time DHS must respond to these requests to be under the 20 day timeframe currently in existing law for prior employers to respond.

Within the bill's requirements for reporting to MSDE, it is unclear how local boards of education would report on the codes of conduct used by nonpublic schools or contracting agencies in the county. This would be a burden on local school systems to manage records of nonpublic schools not under our jurisdiction. In relation to contracting agencies, if the bill is intended to cover all contracting agencies in a county that work with minors (including the newly added childcare centers and youth-serving organizations) these are also entities the school system does not have control over. If the bill is intended to cover contracting agencies specifically used by the local school system who have direct contact with minors, the collection of such records could still be an extensive unfunded mandate to manage on an annual basis. As such, any reporting required of local boards of education should focus on their own records, with an amendment to remove both nonpublic schools and contracting agencies from this section of the bill. The reporting requirements as drafted within the bill are only focused on local boards of education with no similar provisions for other entities subject to the statute.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information on the amended version of SB0770.