



**SUPPORT: House Bill 649**

Advancing Equal Educational Opportunities for All Students  
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
April 1, 2026

The Blueprint Coalition is a coalition of more than 30 organizations representing hundreds of thousands of Marylanders and is co-led by Strong Schools Maryland and the Maryland Education Coalition. The Coalition is dedicated to the full implementation and funding of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and works to ensure that Maryland's public education system meets the needs of all students, particularly those most impacted by systemic inequities.

The Blueprint envisions a public education system where all students feel safe, supported, and able to thrive in their school communities. It was designed to address systemic inequities that disproportionately impact historically marginalized students. **For these reasons, the Blueprint Coalition offers favorable testimony in support of House Bill 649 - Advancing Equal Educational Opportunities for All Students.**

Current state law does not fully protect Maryland students and families. Maryland's existing education anti-discrimination law (Md. Code, Educ. §§ 26-701 to 26-705) is enforced by the Maryland State Department of Education and applies only to preK-12 students. It does not explicitly extend protections to students in higher education, leaving many to rely solely on federal enforcement mechanisms.

While federal civil rights laws have long prohibited discrimination in education, access to enforcement has become increasingly limited. Maryland families now have fewer practical options for filing complaints with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights because of staffing reductions, processing delays, and a high rate of complaint dismissals. As a result, many students and families are left without timely or meaningful resolution when discrimination occurs.

HB 649 addresses these gaps by establishing a stronger, more accessible state-level enforcement framework. The bill authorizes the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights, an independent state agency, to investigate and resolve complaints of discrimination in both preK-12 and higher education settings, including public and private institutions. It also recognizes both intentional discrimination and policies or practices that result in unjustified disparate impacts, reflecting how discrimination often operates in practice.

Strong enforcement of civil rights protections is essential to achieving the goals of the Blueprint. Students cannot fully benefit from increased investments in education if they are learning in environments where discrimination limits their access, participation, or sense of belonging. HB 649 strengthens Maryland's ability to ensure that all students are treated fairly and have equitable opportunities to succeed.

**For these reasons, Blueprint Coalition respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 649.**

Please contact Riya Gupta at [riya@strongschoolsmaryland.org](mailto:riya@strongschoolsmaryland.org) for additional questions.