



HB649: Advancing Equal Educational Opportunities for All Students in Maryland
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

April 1, 2026

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST) is a statewide organization dedicated to closing opportunity gaps by expanding access to high-quality afterschool and summer learning for school-aged young people across Maryland. MOST also serves as the backbone organization for the Maryland Coalition for Community Schools and MENTOR Maryland | DC.

HB 649 expands and strengthens civil rights protections in education and enhances Maryland's ability to enforce those protections in schools. This legislation would affirm that every student in Maryland deserves equal access to education — without discrimination based on race, color, ethnicity, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, age, marital status, or disability.

MOST strongly supports HB 649.

Existing state law leaves too many Maryland students and families without adequate protection. Maryland's current education anti-discrimination statute (Md. Code, Educ. §§ 26-701 to 26-705) is administered by the Maryland State Department of Education and covers only preK-12 students. Students in higher education are not explicitly protected under Maryland law and must instead depend entirely on federal anti-discrimination protections.

Although federal law has long prohibited discrimination in education, access to federal enforcement has significantly eroded. Maryland families face growing barriers to filing complaints with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights due to reduced staffing, lengthening case-processing delays, and an increasing rate of complaint dismissals.

HB 649 establishes a new state law that broadens both protections and avenues for enforcement. It empowers the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights, an independent state agency, to receive, investigate, and resolve discrimination complaints involving public and private preK-12 schools as well as higher education institutions. The bill would shield students from intentional discrimination and from facially neutral policies or practices with an unjustified disparate impact. It would further provide students and families a pathway to pursue education discrimination claims directly in state courts.

Now more than ever, we need to reinforce hard-fought protections for students and families. We urge the committee to provide a favorable report for HB649.

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