

Testimony in Support of SB 903
Education – Engagement Policies and School Compact
(Maryland Public Education Parental Partnership Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment

March 4, 2026

FAVORABLE

Free State PTA (FSPTA) represents over 70,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. As the state's premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities, and a strong advocate for public education. ***We are offering a favorable testimony in support of Senate Bill 903.***

Families are essential partners to schools in the shared mission to help every child reach their full potential. PTA standards encourage Family-School Partnerships necessitating parent organizations to work together to support student success. Research shows that family engagement matters for student success. When families are engaged in school, their students have a higher chance of attending school, graduating, achieving higher levels and avoiding discipline problems. Parents and guardians are important partners in their children's educational success and can provide important perspectives on decisions impacting their children and school.

The bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), in 2015; was passed and signed into law, which made critical improvements to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), enabling greater transparency for parents and encouraging schools to invest in family engagement. Even though the law made critical improvements, various school districts still struggle to connect well with families. There is a need for guidance on effective strategies for equitable and intentional family engagement by schools and is needed in law and policy at state and local levels.

PTA is in support of fostering structured collaboration between families and schools to enhance student outcomes by mandating comprehensive parent engagement policies (by 2027-28) and school-parent compacts (by 2028-29) to ensure shared responsibility for education, including communication, curriculum, and making these materials accessible and in languages parents speak. Parents and teachers are in a better position when working collaboratively with the schools to ensure the students' success. When Parents are aware and understand the school curriculum and process and receive timely, considerate and thoughtful communication, they can work with the teachers, school and the student to support and provide more positive outcomes.

Free State PTA encourages support for SB 903 because it will aim to bring improved engagement with families, sharing responsibility between parents, students and schools. The increased transparency will provide parents clear information regarding curriculum and rights which will be beneficial for the Teachers as well as the families. It will also provide better access by requiring materials to be in plain language and available in multiple languages which will increase in inclusivity. In the long term it can lead to strengthening connection between schools and families which research has shown will lead to better behavior, attendance and academic outcome. Free State PTA urges the committee to issue a favorable report on SB 903.

Thank you,

Free State PTA, Advocacy Committee