

**Please vehemently oppose HB0649.**

Under the angelic title of "Equal Educational Opportunities" the MD Commission on Civil Rights will, *without the slightest exaggeration*, be able to deny our Christian schools mission-aligned enrollment and other policies *at their whim*. This bill further allows for the "private right of action" as well as uncapped punitive damages to be assigned based on litigation which the MDCRC can instigate unprovoked.

2 scenarios:

1. Faith Baptist School, a religious-exempt school in Salisbury, MD, abiding by their statement of faith, does not enroll a student who, for example, was Muslim (and of course this could be easily reversed to be a Muslim school not enrolling a Jewish student, etc). The CRC could immediately step in with whatever process it deems appropriate to punish the school. Opponents may read of bit of "carve out" language for schools operating under a religious institution, but we very much see this as pointed at the religious instruction as written and not a guarantee of mission-aligned processes or the conduct of those beliefs.

2. So let's instead go to a school that isn't under a church. Salisbury Christian School, is an independently operating approved non-public school in MD, a Christian school. The poorly worded religious institution lines do not cover SCS at all. So again, should Salisbury Christian School decide it would be against its policies to allow a student who was actively transitioning to be enrolled in their institution, the MDCRC, according to this bill, could (and as the MDCRC is known to be a punishing group not a mediation group) file a civil action against the school for compensatory and uncapped punitive damages! Even if the school won the trial, how many hundreds of thousands of dollars would such cost and at what social capital cost after the smear campaign?

On that point, notice that in this bill, uncapped punitive damages may be levied at the private institution *but not public schools*. Why would that be?

This bill creates a duplicate system to the one the books currently, created in 2022, for the grievance process between nonpublic schools who take state funding and an affronted party. That framework is already working! In fact, at this moment, there exists in that system no failure or evidence of failure, no backlog, no pattern of systemic issue, no outcry from thousands of affronted parties, no grass roots effort to overturn it. But this bill would make the MDCRC a duplicative process, destabilizing and prioritizing itself over the first. And again, this is a commission which deals with employment and housing. As such, how would it be able to effectively mediate school matters? The 2022 MSDE compromise is absolutely fine as is, handling what minute pressure may be found as one-off situations arise and should not be used as a reason to increase the bureaucracy.

Christian schools in Maryland provide an incredible service to our communities and do not charge the state a dime to do it. Please allow us to continue what we do unmolested from the MDCRC.

Perhaps actually, the MDCRC should turn its attention to the public school system and its 12,000+ cases filed against the system by 12,000+ child sex abuse claims as of March 2026  
<https://www.thebanner.com/politics-power/state-government/maryland-child-abuse-lawsuit-payouts-2TOSHUGW5BBJPSACDFMMI2LAM/>.

Respectfully,

Mark Zockoll (Board Member, Faith Baptist School, Salisbury, MD)