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April 1, 2026

TO: The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: Jennifer Frederick, Assistant Attorney General
Counsel, Maryland Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention
Executive Division, Maryland Office of the Attorney General

RE: House Bill 14 - County Boards of Education - Bullying, Harassment, or
Intimidation - Information Collection and Reporting Requirements -
Favorable with Amendments

The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) supports House Bill 14, County Boards of Education - Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation - Information Collection and Reporting Requirements, sponsored by Delegate Foley, with the amendments described below. As amended, HB 14 requires the reporting of incidents of bullying, harassment, or intimidation motivated by personal characteristics only if there has been a change in the number of incidents from the year prior or if there is disproportionate number of incidents for students within that group.

The OAG commends Delegate Foley for continuing to advance legislation that strengthens Maryland's response to hate bias incidents in our schools. The bill takes meaningful steps forward toward combatting hate bias in Maryland schools before it becomes criminal conduct. However, we respectfully request an amendment to restore the bill's language to the language of the bill as introduced.

The Bill as Amended

As amended, § 7-424(e)(3) of the Education Article will require a county board to include personal-characteristic-disaggregated incident data in its annual report to the State Board *only* when a condition is met. The result is that if a county board is experiencing persistent but steady bias-motivated bullying against a protected group, the county board would *not* be required to report that data since there hasn't been a change in the number of incidents from the year prior.

This makes year-to-year comparisons nearly impossible and the State Board, the OAG, and the Maryland Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention would receive an incomplete and inconsistent picture of hate bias in Maryland schools.

Benefits of Reporting in The Bill as Introduced

The bill as introduced required county boards to report, and post publicly, information about *all* incidents determined to be motivated by an actual or perceived personal characteristic, disaggregated by the motivating characteristic annually. This requirement would have resulted in more data being reported and thus allowing for more targeted policymaking and recommendations around addressing hate in schools in a way that benefits the whole community in a way that the amended version does not.

HB 14 as currently drafted would not create a consistent way to share how prevalent hate bias incidents are in schools without involving law enforcement for non-criminal activity because schools would not necessarily report the same data every year. Currently, the only official mechanism for monitoring hate across the state is to report it to law enforcement, which means that school faculty and staff are less likely to make an official report of a hate bias incident when it requires further disruption to the classroom setting and time spent reporting for already busy education professionals. By creating a pathway for schools to consistently share data on hate bias incidents in the original draft of HB 14, education professionals will be able to use mechanisms already available to them without creating an additional requirement to report all hate bias incidents and without needing to report to local law enforcement. This would create clearer data on acts of hate as required in the original draft, and thus all of Maryland would have a better understanding of what an act of hate looks like in our schools.

Conclusion

To ensure effective implementation and alignment with the OAG's dedication to addressing hate based on as accurate data as possible, we respectfully recommend HB 14 be amended to reflect the language of the bill as originally introduced. By returning to the language in the bill as introduced, this legislation would provide schools, the OAG, the Maryland Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention, and the State with more consistently accurate data on hate bias incidents in schools which, in turn, will allow all parties involved to craft better policies towards combating hate before it rises to the level of criminal activity.

For the foregoing reasons, the Office of the Attorney General respectfully urges the Committee to give House Bill 14 a favorable report with the amendments described above.