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Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

House Bill 0014 – County Boards of Education - Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation – Information Collection and Reporting Requirements
Position: Favorable

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Ronnie L. Taylor, and I serve as the Community Impact Director at FreeState Justice. I am submitting this testimony to strongly support House Bill 0014.

HB0014 addresses a fundamental flaw in how we handle bullying in Maryland schools. Currently, we record incidents but lack understanding of their causes or who is most affected. This bill improves that by requiring schools to identify when bullying is linked to actual or perceived personal characteristics and to report this data in a clear and meaningful way.

Students already tell us that bullying is often based on identity. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that students ages 12 to 18 identify bullying related to race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and other characteristics. Ignoring these details by treating all incidents the same overlooks what students themselves are reporting.

The burden is unevenly distributed. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that about 40% of transgender and questioning students faced bullying at school, and approximately 26% attempted suicide in the past year.

GLSEN research shows a similar pattern in Maryland. Most LGBTQ students experience anti-LGBTQ bullying. Over half face verbal harassment based on sexual orientation, and many experience physical harassment related to gender identity.

Maryland-specific findings also reveal underreporting and unsafe school climates. State research and the Governor's Commission recognize that many LGBTQ students do not report incidents and that school environments stay hostile. This indicates current data systems are incomplete and do not fully capture the extent of harm.

HB0014 aligns with how civil rights data is already collected at the federal level. The U.S. Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection gathers and disaggregates school climate data by race, sex, disability, and other characteristics. It

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At FreeState Justice, we envision a Maryland where LGBTQ+ people live openly with the dignity they deserve. Facing discrimination shouldn't keep anyone from being themselves. Through pro bono legal services, policy advocacy, resource connections, and community support, FreeState works to break down those barriers so all Marylanders can thrive.

also tracks harassment based on sexual orientation and other protected classes. This bill brings Maryland in line with established practice.

Research supports this approach. StopBullying.gov confirms that strong policies and targeted interventions reduce bullying. Peer-reviewed studies and recent meta-analyses show that policies addressing sexual orientation and gender identity are linked to lower victimization and increased school safety.

HB0014 also safeguards student privacy. It mandates aggregate reporting and clearly forbids publishing any information that could identify a student. It maintains report form data as confidential and keeps it out of permanent educational records.

The policy case is simple. You can't fix what you don't measure. The National Academies have identified bullying as a major issue affecting student well-being and stress the need for better data to understand patterns and outcomes.

This bill provides Maryland with the tools to identify disparities, implement targeted interventions, and hold systems accountable. It does not add a new burden; it brings clarity.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on House Bill 0014.

In Community,

Ronnie L. Taylor

Ronnie L. Taylor

Sources:

1. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/a10>
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/yrbs/>
3. <https://glisten.org/research/>
4. <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/>
5. <https://www.stopbullying.gov/>
6. <https://www.nationalacademies.org/projects/IOM-BCYF-14-09/publication/23482>