

Testimony on HB0014
County Boards of Education - Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation - Information
Collection and Reporting Requirements
Favorable With Amendments

March 30, 2026

The Honorable Chair Senator Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, and esteemed members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

I am writing to ask you to vote in favor of HB0014 with amendments. This bill would improve upon the existing reporting process in Maryland public schools relating to alleged incidents of bullying, harassment, or intimidation occurring on school property, sponsored events, while traveling to or from school, or through electronic communication.

The harmful effects of bullying are well-documented. Students have a right to learn in a safe, productive, and inclusive environment that is free from bullying and intimidation. In furtherance of this goal, the Maryland legislature has already adopted anti-bullying laws requiring standardized reporting. Unfortunately, in many cases, the collection and reporting process lacks important information about the motivation behind the incidents, and each county school board decides what data to track. This information could provide insights to educators, parents, and policymakers interested in combatting bullying in our schools. One key data point that should be tracked is whether the incident was believed to have been motivated by an actual or a perceived personal characteristic of the victim.

Specifically, the standardized report forms should include whether the incident was motivated by a person's race, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, ancestry, physical attributes, socioeconomic status, familial status, or physical or mental ability or disability. In turn, this categorized data should be included in the annual reports to the State Board of Education, and it should be made easily accessible to the public by website posting. HB0014 would add these requirements, and the data would be disaggregated by the motivating personal characteristic.

The amendment language added by the House, however, would require this enhanced reporting only if "there has been a substantial increase in incidents of bullying, harassment, or intimidation for students in that group over the previous school year; or (ii) there is a disproportionate incident rate of bullying, harassment, or intimidation for students in that group." *See House Bill 14, p.4, lines 23-28.* These conditions should be removed so that the more comprehensive, disaggregated data is collected regardless of the number or rate of incidents so that trends can be identified with no arbitrary limitations.

We should not tolerate bullying, harassment or intimidation based on personal characteristics in any setting, least of all our public schools. Considering the current climate in which hate speech

and discrimination are on the rise, it is important to stand up for vulnerable persons, including members of the LGBTQ+ community, people with disabilities, people all backgrounds and socioeconomic status. I believe these enhancements to the existing process for reporting and publicizing data on bullying in Maryland public schools would help inform parents, raise awareness about the reasons behind bullying, and document the prevalence of the problems in specific areas. Please help improve the process for combatting bullying by voting favorably with amendments on HB0014.

Respectfully Submitted,

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