



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

HB14: County Boards of Education, Energy and the Environment - Bullying, Harassment, Intimidation-Information Collection and Reporting Requirements

**Education, Energy and Environment - April 1, 2026
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC) for the 2026 legislative session. WDC is one of Maryland's largest and most active Democratic clubs with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials. I am a member of the WDC's Next Generation and a student in Montgomery County Public Schools.

We urge the passage of HB 14 County Boards of Education – Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation – Information Collection and Reporting Requirements with Senator Brooks' amendment. This change will ensure that reporting on bullying, harassment, and intimidation is disaggregated and reported each year—and that this specific data is available on county board websites.

It is crucial that school administrations properly understand the identity-based bullying and harassment that students in their schools too often face. Improving data collection is an extremely important first step to doing so. The current report combines reporting on all races and ethnicities, all religions, and all sexual orientations into one. This grouping makes it harder to determine the specific ways in which students may be targeted for their identities. HB14 will enable the collection of better, more specific data on the personal characteristics targeted by bullying and harassment.

According to the most recent Maryland State Department of Education Report on Bullying, Harassment and Intimidation, incidents of bullying, harassment and intimidation in Montgomery County have increased by 40% since the pandemic. As a junior attending Walt Whitman High School, a public Montgomery County school, this statistic is shocking.

At my school, incidents of bullying, harassment, and intimidation are more common than administrators realize. People are targeted for their religion, race, and gender. This year, for example, there have already been a number of anti-semitic and Islamophobic incidents, reaching the level of obscene language and even death threats. As a student at the school, this is deeply concerning. Schools should be a place for learning and community, not a place where students fear harassment due to their personal identity. However, the current data fails to tell us who is targeted. By aggregating all data together, we risk failing to see which specific identities are being targeted most. When things are getting worse for a specific community, you cannot



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tell.

Bullying, harassment, and intimidation are also driving factors when it comes to chronic absenteeism. When students are specifically targeted for their identity, they are much less likely to consistently attend school. Alongside these school absences, this kind of bullying and harassment also contributes to mental health issues, especially when they are being targeted for things they can't change. Experts from the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* state that for this bullying to stop, the underlying causes must be clearly identified.

This bill is a crucial step towards ensuring the ability of schools to intervene in bullying, harassment, and intimidation incidents. By passing this bill and disaggregating this data, we move towards safer schools and higher attendance for Maryland.

We ask for your support for HB 14 with Senator Brooks' amendment and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.

Uma Chivvis, Montgomery County Public School Student
Chair, Women's Democratic Club Next Generation