



INFORMATIONAL: House Bill 14

County Boards of Education - Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation - Information Collection and Reporting Requirements

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

April 1, 2026

The Blueprint Coalition is a coalition of more than 30 organizations representing hundreds of thousands of Marylanders and is co-led by Strong Schools Maryland and the Maryland Education Coalition. The coalition is dedicated to the full implementation and funding of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and works to ensure that Maryland's public education system meets the needs of all students, particularly those most impacted by systemic inequities. Grounded in our shared values, the Blueprint Coalition believes that data, reporting transparency, and public accessibility are essential to ensuring the Blueprint can address structural inequities, including racism and discrimination. **Strong Schools Maryland offers informational testimony for HB 14 - County Boards of Education - Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation - Information Collection and Reporting Requirements.**

House Bill 14 takes a step toward greater transparency and accountability by strengthening how bullying and harassment data are collected and publicly reported. The bill proposes adding a component to the Bullying Report Form to indicate whether an incident is believed to have been motivated by actual or perceived characteristics of the impacted student. It also requires county boards to publish this data in a disaggregated format. These changes are intended to surface patterns of harm that are often hidden in aggregate reporting

Safe school environments are foundational to educational equity. When students experience bullying or harassment related to race, disability, gender identity, immigration status, or socioeconomic background, it undermines their sense of safety, belonging, and ability to engage academically. HB 14 aligns with the goals of the Blueprint by aiming to better understand and address these harms. We cannot effectively respond to inequities if we do not understand who is being impacted.

While we support the intent of the bill, we urge the Committee to carefully consider possible unintended consequences of implementing such a policy. Key considerations include the following:

- Accurately identifying motivating personal characteristics requires clear standards and cultural competency. HB 14 does not specify who is responsible for determining whether an incident was motivated by a particular characteristic or when that determination should occur within the investigative process. Without this clarity, implementation may vary across districts, resulting in inconsistent and potentially unreliable data.
- Determining motivation is complex and often subjective. Without adequate training and guidance, requiring school-level staff to make and document these determinations may lead to inconsistent or inaccurate reporting, particularly in communities where trust between families and school systems is fragile.
- Disaggregated reporting may create privacy risks. In smaller schools or districts, small data sets increase the likelihood of indirect identification of individual students, even when personally identifiable information is removed.
- Protecting privacy should not limit schools' ability to respond to harm. Schools and districts should still be encouraged to collect detailed internal data to identify patterns, partner with impacted communities, and direct resources and interventions where they are most needed.

With thoughtful implementation, clear guidance, and appropriate safeguards, HB 14 can serve as a meaningful tool to improve transparency, accountability, and student well-being.

Please contact Kenzie Funk at kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org for additional questions.