



PSSAM
Public School Superintendents' Association
OF MARYLAND

Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director
1217 S. Potomac Street
Baltimore, MD 21224
410-935-7281
marypat.fannon@pssam.org

BILL: HB 326

TITLE: Education - Maryland Center for School Safety - Anonymous Reporting System

DATE: April 7, 2026

POSITION: Favorable

COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **supports** House Bill 326.

This bill requires the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) to develop and administer an anonymous reporting system that (1) coordinates the receipt of information relating to a school or student safety concern in a manner that maintains confidentiality and (2) provides a mechanism for any reported information to be forwarded to school or other appropriate officials. A custodian of public records under the Maryland Public Information Act (PIA) must deny inspection of any information or materials related to the anonymous reporting system.

(https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2026RS/fnotes/bil_0006/hb0326.pdf)

School safety is a top priority for every superintendent in Maryland. Over the past several years, local school systems have invested significantly in comprehensive safety frameworks that include behavioral threat assessment teams, mental health services, strong school-law enforcement partnerships, and preventive education for students and families. Anonymous reporting systems are a critical component of that layered approach.

Maryland's existing program - Safe Schools Maryland - is already in operation statewide and is used by every public school system. Several local systems also had internal reporting platforms or similar mechanisms in place prior to the establishment of the statewide system. In our experience, these tools have become essential for identifying concerns early and responding appropriately before situations escalate.

Anonymous reporting systems work because they address a well-documented reality - students often know when a peer is struggling or expressing harmful intent, but they hesitate to report it. Fear of retaliation, social pressure, or being labeled discourages disclosure. Providing a secure, anonymous method for sharing concerns helps overcome that barrier and fosters a culture of shared responsibility for safety.

Importantly, these systems are not limited to preventing acts of violence. In practice, many tips involve students experiencing depression, suicidal ideation, bullying, substance misuse, or other mental health challenges. When reports are received, they are routed through established Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management processes. The focus is not punishment - it is intervention, support, and connection to services.

Superintendents across Maryland have seen firsthand the value of this approach. Tips have allowed school teams to intervene early, provide counseling, engage families, and coordinate with community partners when necessary. In many cases, the result is not discipline, but support and stabilization.

Equally important, the bill protects the confidentiality of reporting. Anonymity is foundational to the effectiveness of any tip line. Students and community members must trust that their identities will not be disclosed. The bill's exemption of system records from disclosure under the Public Information Act appropriately balances transparency with the overriding public interest in safety, mental health intervention, and suicide prevention. Without those protections, reporting would decline and the system's effectiveness would be compromised.

We also note that participation in the statewide system does not eliminate local flexibility. School systems retain authority to establish procedures, align responses with their existing threat assessment protocols, and ensure appropriate coordination with administrators, school resource officers, and student support staff. The statewide infrastructure simply provides a reliable, professionally monitored platform operating 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

HB 326 provides important legislative validation to ensure the long-term viability and consistency of this statewide resource. Codifying the program formally recognizes its existence, clarifies the Maryland Center for School Safety's responsibility to establish operational guidelines, and ensures consistent standards across systems.

For the reasons stated above, PSSAM requests a **favorable report** on House Bill 326.