

March 2, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman

Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

2 West Miller Senate Office Building

11 Bladen Street

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support for SB 903, Education, Engagement Policies and School Compact, Maryland Public Education Parental Partnership Act

Dear Chair Feldman,

Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU) is honored to express our strong support for Senate Bill 903, Education, Engagement Policies and School Compact, Maryland Public Education Parental Partnership Act. This legislation requires county boards of education to develop parent and family engagement policies by the start of the 2027 to 2028 school year, requires public schools to develop a Parent School Compact beginning in the 2028 to 2029 school year, and requires the Maryland State Department of Education to provide guidance and technical assistance.

Family engagement is one of the strongest predictors of student success that schools can influence without waiting for new buildings or new testing systems. A clear engagement policy and a meaningful school compact create shared expectations about attendance, communication, learning supports, and respectful problem solving. For families, this turns engagement from an informal invitation into a defined right and responsibility with structure behind it.

The need is visible in Maryland's attendance data. Maryland State Board materials show chronic absence rates varied widely across local education agencies, ranging from 17 percent to 49 percent in school year 2023 to 2024. Strong parent and family engagement policies paired with school level compacts help address chronic absence by improving communication, removing barriers, and creating early intervention pathways before students fall behind.

This bill is essential for Latino and immigrant communities who often face language access barriers, inflexible work schedules, and unfamiliarity with school processes. Maryland is 13.3 percent Hispanic or Latino, and 16.6 percent of residents are foreign born. Engagement policies that require clarity and consistency, supported by state guidance, can standardize translation practices, improve culturally responsive outreach, and ensure families receive actionable information, not just paperwork.

Implications for Latino and immigrant Marylanders include stronger relationships with educators, earlier identification of academic and social needs, and increased access to resources

that improve student outcomes. It also helps schools build durable partnerships that extend beyond crises and into everyday learning.

MLU urges the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 903, strengthening parent partnership as a core component of Maryland's public education system.

Sincerely,

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