



Testimony - HB 649, Advancing Equal Educational Opportunities for All Students in  
Maryland  
Favorable  
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
April 1, 2026  
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Honorable Chairman Feldman & Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

SEIU Local 500 represents over ten thousand education support professionals in Montgomery County — paraeducators, food service workers, bus drivers, custodians, clerical staff, and other frontline employees who make our schools run every single day. They are the adults who open buildings before sunrise, who ensure classrooms are clean and safe, who help students with disabilities succeed, who feed children nutritious meals, and who keep schools functioning smoothly. They dedicate their lives to ensuring every child has an equal opportunity for a quality education.

Opportunities that are often fraught with systemic barriers and discrimination that Maryland law already says clearly, discrimination in education is illegal.

The problem is—it is far too often unenforced, delayed, or inaccessible for the very students who need protection most. HB 649 fixes that.

This bill does something fundamental, it gives civil rights in education real enforcement power.

Right now, when a student is discriminated against—whether based on race, disability, gender identity, or national origin—families are forced to navigate a confusing, slow, and often ineffective complaint process. In many cases, nothing happens in time to actually protect the student.

HB 649 changes the equation by providing real accountability. For SEIU Local 500 members in Montgomery County, this is not theoretical.

Our members work every day with:

- English learner and immigrant students who face discrimination tied to language status and national origin;
- Students with disabilities whose IEPs and 504 plans are not fully honored, effectively denying them equal access to education;
- LGBTQ+ students, including transgender students, who still face hostile environments despite existing protections;
- And Black and Latino students who continue to experience disproportionate discipline and exclusion.

We also represent the workers—paraeducators, family engagement specialists, and support staff—who are often the first to see these inequities and try to intervene, only to run into bureaucratic barriers that prevent timely action. HB 649 breaks down those barriers.

For the families our members serve in Montgomery County, delays in addressing discrimination are not minor inconveniences—they have lifelong consequences. Lost instructional time, unsafe environments, and unequal access to resources all compound over time.

You cannot have educational equity without enforcement, you cannot have enforcement without authority, And, you cannot have authority without consequences. HB 649 delivers all three.

SEIU Local 500 urges a favorable report.

Thank you for your time and consideration.