

Tafshier Cosby, National Parents Union

Written Testimony in Support of Maryland Senate Bill 350

**Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
SB 350 – Public Schools – Open Enrollment Policies**

Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Tafshier Cosby, and I serve as Senior Director of Organizing and Partnerships at the National Parents Union (NPU), a national network of parent leaders and organizations representing families across the country. I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of Maryland Senate Bill 350 (2026 Regular Session).

At the National Parents Union, we believe families deserve access to high-quality public education options that meet the unique needs of their children. SB 350 represents a thoughtful, responsible step toward expanding opportunity for Maryland families by authorizing local school boards to adopt open enrollment policies.

This bill does three important things:

First, it expands access.

SB 350 allows county boards of education to permit students to attend public schools outside of their assigned attendance zones at no cost to families. For many parents, especially those whose children may not be thriving in their zoned school this flexibility can be life-changing. School boundaries should not become barriers to opportunity.

Second, it preserves local decision-making.

This legislation does not impose a statewide mandate. Instead, it authorizes local boards to adopt policies that reflect their communities' needs. That flexibility matters. District leaders are best positioned to determine how to structure application processes, timelines, and communication systems that work for their families.

Third, it balances choice with capacity.

SB 350 appropriately requires that any open enrollment policy account for building capacity and staffing limitations. This ensures that implementation is responsible and sustainable. Open enrollment should increase access not create overcrowding or strain school systems. The bill's clear guardrails help maintain that balance.

From our experience working with parent leaders nationwide, we know families want more transparency, more clarity, and more agency in educational decisions. Open enrollment policies, when well-designed, promote fairness by creating clear application processes and defined criteria for participation. They reduce the informal advantages that often benefit only families with insider knowledge or financial means.

Importantly, SB 350 keeps public education dollars in public schools. It strengthens the public system by allowing families to seek better-fit options within it.

Parents are not asking for chaos. They are asking for access. They are asking for options when a placement is not working. They are asking to be trusted as partners in their children's education.

SB 350 moves Maryland closer to a public education system that works for more families without dismantling local authority, without imposing mandates, and without ignoring capacity realities.

On behalf of the National Parents Union and the families we represent, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 350.

Thank you for your consideration.

Reverentially submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tafshier Cosby".

Tafshier Cosby

Senior Director of Organizing and Partnerships
National Parents Union