

BILL: HB 649

POSITION: FAV – Favorable

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

HEARING DATE: April 1, 2026

SUBMITTED BY: Maryland Department of Disabilities
217 East Redwood Street, Suite 1300, Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is pleased to submit this letter of support for **HB 649, Advancing Equal Educational Opportunities for All Students in Maryland Act**.

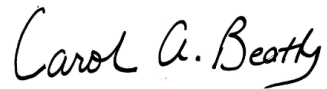
This legislation authorizes the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR) to investigate and resolve complaints of discrimination in educational settings, as well as granting students and families the ability to file civil actions in state court. This important bill would provide stronger legal protections and increased opportunities for recourse when students with disabilities as well as students in other protected classes feel they have been discriminated against in educational settings.

Expanding Maryland's anti-discrimination law for students in higher education and increasing options for enforcement in Maryland is critical, particularly as changes at the Federal level are leaving students unprotected. Increasing the state's oversight is not intended to replace Federal responsibilities or complaints processes; Maryland students can still file claims with the U.S. Department of Education if such mechanisms are available. Rather, this legislation mirrors decades-old Federal protections in Maryland law, thus ensuring those protections and processes remain available to students and families at the state level regardless of Federal actions and capacity.

This legislation is particularly helpful for students receiving, or eligible to receive, accommodations in educational settings under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act ("Section 504"). Maryland families and students with disabilities have long needed a state-level option for pursuing complaints about violations of Section 504. In recent years, they were only able to access local or Federal processes.

HB 649 addresses long standing gaps in disability anti-discrimination in Maryland's schools. This legislation is critical to ensuring that rights of students with disabilities are protected. For these reasons, MDOD respectfully requests a **favorable report on HB 649**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol A. Beatty". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial 'C'.

Carol A. Beatty

Secretary, Department of Disabilities