



## **HB1310 Public High Schools – Student Transcripts – Traumatic Loss Notation**

**Position: Favorable**

**April 1, 2026**

The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE), a coalition of education advocacy, civil rights, and community-based organizations committed to eliminating racial disparities in Maryland's education system, **offers favorable testimony in support of House Bill 1310.**

### **Why This Bill Is an Equity Issue**

HB 1310 allows high school students who have lost a parent or sibling to reproductive cancer — including breast, cervical, or uterine cancer — to request a traumatic loss notation on their official transcript. This notation provides critical context for college admissions officers, scholarship reviewers, and others evaluating a student's academic record.

This is not a peripheral concern for MAREE. Across Maryland's education landscape, systemic and structural racism and inequality are pervasive— and that includes the ways in which the education system responds to, or fails to respond to, trauma experienced disproportionately by Black and Brown students and families. Black women in Maryland and across the country face significantly higher mortality rates from the cancers named in this bill — breast, cervical, and uterine cancer — compared to their white counterparts. This means Black students are among those most likely to carry the weight of exactly this kind of loss while sitting in a classroom.

When a student loses a parent or sibling, grief reshapes every dimension of their life: their attendance, their concentration, their grades. Yet without a mechanism to provide context, a transcript tells none of that story. What it can appear to tell — to an admissions committee or a scholarship panel — is that the student lacked effort or commitment. For Black and Brown students who already navigate implicit bias in evaluative processes, this silence on the transcript is not neutral. It is a harm.

### **A Student-Centered, Privacy-Affirming Design**

MAREE appreciates that this bill was constructed with student dignity at its center. The notation is entirely opt-in. Privacy is protected through language that frames the circumstance as a "documented compelling personal circumstance" or an "exceptional hardship acknowledgement," shielding sensitive medical details. Students may also choose to accompany the notation with a personal letter, on their own terms and with parental approval if under 18. This approach affirms student voice and autonomy — values at the core of what MAREE envisions for a public education system that is joyful, healthy, equitable, engaging, and culturally affirming.

### **The Counselor Mandate Closes an Equity Gap**

The bill's requirement that school counselors proactively inform eligible students and surviving parents about this option is essential. Without active outreach, access to this notation would almost certainly be uneven — skewing toward students in more resourced schools or families with deeper familiarity with college processes. The counselor notification requirement helps ensure that this protection reaches the students who need it most, regardless of their ZIP code or school system.

HB 1310 passed the House of Delegates 132–0. This unanimity underscores what MAREE has long known: investing in Black and Brown students' education and success creates a stronger future for all of Maryland. Supporting students through grief is not a partisan act — it is a foundational one.

Every student who loses a parent or sibling to cancer and still shows up to school is demonstrating extraordinary resilience. Maryland's public education system should affirm that resilience — not inadvertently penalize it. HB 1310 gives students a meaningful, voluntary tool to ensure their full story can be told. MAREE urges this Committee to report it **favorably**.

peace & truth,  
sharlimar douglass  
Education Justice Advocate & Analyst  
Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE)