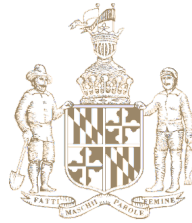


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Education, Energy, and
Environment Committee

Chair, Joint Committee on
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of SB720- Education - Artificial Intelligence - Guidelines, Professional Development, and Collaborative (Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act)

February 18, 2026

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee.

Thank you for your consideration of SB720, the Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act. This legislation marks a critical step in ensuring that Maryland’s public schools proactively and responsibly integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into education, preparing students for the future workforce while equipping educators with the necessary tools and knowledge.

Over the past several years, AI has surged across industries, including education. In the classroom, AI offers unparalleled opportunities:

- **For educators**, AI can streamline administrative tasks such as lesson planning, grading, and assessments, allowing educators to focus on student engagement.
- **For students**, AI-powered tutoring provides personalized, one-on-one learning support, enhancing student’s learning outcomes.¹
- **For schools**, AI-driven tools expand access to language learning, career exploration, and adaptive instruction, ensuring that every student, regardless of background or ability, receives a high-quality education.²

However, with such powerful opportunities come equal risks. AI tools like OpenAI’s ChatGPT have already demonstrated issues with bias, cybersecurity, and misinformation. Without proper oversight, AI can reinforce inequities, compromise student data privacy, and lead to overreliance on automated systems. Schools may struggle to integrate AI effectively and ethically without clear policies, training, and accountability measures.

¹ [Colordao AI in K-12 Education_December 2024.pdf](#)

²<https://www.coloradoinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Colorado-Roadmap-for-AI-in-K-12-Education-August-2024.pdf>

This committee has heard versions of this bill over the last three years. Although last year's bill didn't pass, we were able to secure funding for Morgan State University to conduct a needs assessment and pull together a stakeholder group to ensure that we understood what our schools really need. The stakeholder group was made up of teachers, State Board of Education members, MSDE, AI experts, and computer scientists, and we worked throughout the interim to ensure we got it right in 2026.

As part of this process, Morgan State University conducted a needs assessment to understand how schools are already using AI, and what they need most in terms of technical support and training. This statewide survey found that:

- Over 40% of educators had received no training whatsoever from their school about the use of AI;
- Respondents from rural and underserved communities were less likely to have received AI training;
- Of respondents who had received guidance, many reported that it was “minimal,” “brief,” or self-sought; and
- The most common needs identified by educators included clear guidelines, instruction for responsible use by students, and training on best practices to support teaching efforts.

Maryland's schools currently face disparities in AI readiness and opportunity. The assessment shows that while districts such as Washington, Allegany, and Howard Counties are actively engaging with AI initiatives, others — including Baltimore City, Garrett County, and Somerset County — have less. Also concerning, higher engagement does not necessarily mean higher-quality implementation. Without clear statewide direction, these differences risk creating a new achievement gap as students enter an AI-driven economy. Establishing consistent statewide standards will ensure that every student, regardless of zip code, has access to meaningful AI education and the skills needed to compete in tomorrow's workforce.

SB 720 will create a stable foundation which ensures that all school systems are on track towards AI literacy in a consistent manner - and can benefit from collaboration, best practice and guardrails. Specifically, SB720:

- **Establishes Statewide AI Guidance:** Tasks the Department of Education with providing guidance to school systems, educators, parents, and students on the safe and ethical use of AI, to be reviewed and updated annually;

- **Mandates Compliance:** Require each local school system to adopt policies aligned with the Department’s guidance within 120 days of their release, and designate a local coordinator to oversee implementation;
- **Establishes Coordination With Maryland Schools:** Directs Morgan State University or another 4-year higher education institution in Maryland to assist in evaluating AI tools and certifying that they are consistent with State guidelines;
- **Cements AI Workforce Standards and Professional Development:** Requires that AI literacy is implemented into statewide workforce preparation standards and included as a compensated component of teacher professional development training by June 1, 2027; and
- **Creates an AI Collaborative:** Creates a Maryland AI Education Collaborative on AI in K-12 education, composed of relevant stakeholders and State entities, to study and provide recommendations regarding best AI policy in schools.

The demand for AI expertise is ongoing, and will only increase as technologies grow more advanced and accessible. Already, thousands of employers in our State are actively seeking data scientists and workers with AI expertise.³ Without a clear and strategic plan for AI integration, Maryland risks falling behind, leaving students underprepared for the workforce they will enter, and teachers struggling to adapt to technology-driven classrooms. SB720 ensures that Maryland leads the way in fostering an equitable, modern, and innovative education system.

I respectfully request a favorable report on SB720 to position Maryland as a leader in AI-driven education.

Sincerely,



Senator Katie Fry Hester
Howard & Montgomery Counties

³ <https://www.umgc.edu/news/archives/2025/07/umgc-responds-to-new-workforce-demands-for-an-ai-driven-future>