

HB 649

Senate Education, Energy and the Environment

Unfavorable

Amy Waychoff

Montgomery County, LD 18

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I am testifying in strong opposition to HB 649, Advancing Equal Educational Opportunities for All Students in Maryland, also known as the “Private Education Control Act.” This bill seeks to hand control to the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR), while tacking on a brand new private right of action with exorbitant money damages. This would invite a wave of lawsuits, forum shopping, and conflicting rulings, turning education disputes into a litigation free-for-all for lawyers and activists, with your child’s school caught in the crosshairs. The bill expands enforcement and litigation risk while leaving faith-based schools at the mercy of Maryland’s inadequate religious liberty protections. No wonder a coalition of Muslim, Jewish, and Catholic parochial schools is forming to fight this bill. HB 649 arms unelected commissioners and disgruntled plaintiffs with all but unlimited power to punish schools for living out their religious convictions on marriage, sexuality, and school conduct while treating constitutional protections as a dead letter. Please do not let this bill go forward.