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Executive Nominations Committee

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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The Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
SB 903 – Education – Engagement Policies and School Compact (Maryland
Public Education Parental Partnership Act)
Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza

Thank you Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and my fellow members of the distinguished Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee for this opportunity to present Senate Bill 903, the Maryland Public Education Parental Partnership Act, and ask for a favorable report.

This legislation represents a significant advancement in educational equity and transparency by establishing a statewide framework for parental engagement and the creation of Parent-School Compacts.

By way of background, the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a bipartisan measure signed by President Barack Obama in 2015, requires schools receiving Title 1 funds to develop Parent-School Compacts, which have been a cornerstone of student success for our most vulnerable populations. ESSA recognizes that gaps in educational opportunity and achievement are only remedied when those closest to the affected students – parents, families, and communities – are driving decision-making.

SB 903 takes a commonsense approach and expands these same protections and rights to every student in Maryland. The right to transparency, clear expectations, and a formal partnership with one's school should not be determined by school status or zip code. SB 903 would ensure that all parents, regardless of the average income of a school's student body, are recognized as essential stakeholders in the education process.

This legislation would also support the Community School model as outlined in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, as Education Article §9.9–101 states that “providing family and community engagement and supports, including informing parents of academic course offerings, language classes, workforce development training, opportunities for children, and available social services as well as educating families on how to monitor a child's learning” is included in the wrap-around services required by Community Schools. SB 903 would provide a standardized mechanism to meet this statutory requirement through a formal, documented pathway for communication. The Parent-School Compact would outline how parents, students, and school staff would share the responsibility for improving student achievement and would describe how parents and teachers would communicate.

According to the Harvard Graduate School of Education, over 50 years of research has revealed the striking benefits of schools actively partnering with families to improve their children's learning. **Students** enjoy higher grades, better engagement and attendance at school, greater self-esteem, and higher rates of graduation and college/post-secondary enrollment. **Educators** have increased job satisfaction, greater success in motivating and engaging with students from different backgrounds, more support from families, and an improved mindset about students and families. **Families** enjoy stronger relationships with their children, better rapport with educators, and are less isolated. **Schools** have a better climate, greater retention of teachers, and more support. **Communities** become better places to live and raise children, have students with fewer high-risk behaviors, greater participation in afterschool programs, and expanded family and youth involvement in decision-making.

SB 903 is a proven link to educational **outcomes**. The "Parental Partnership" described in this bill is not merely an informality; it is an **evidence-based strategy** for improving student performance. Research consistently demonstrates that when parents and schools enter into a formal compact:

- **Academic Performance Improves:** Students show higher proficiency in math and reading when home-school expectations are aligned.
- **Absenteeism Decreases:** Clear communication regarding attendance policies and mutual responsibilities leads to higher engagement.
- **Equal Opportunity is Realized:** For families who are disconnected from the education system – including multilingual learners and parents of students with disabilities – this bill provides the technical assistance, translation services, and training necessary to level the playing field.

SB 903 recognizes that a child's education is most effective when it is a shared journey. By adopting the rigorous engagement standards of Title 1 and the collaborative framework of community schools, this legislation ensures that every Maryland family has a seat at the table.

I thank you for your kind attention and consideration, and I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 903.