

Testimony in favor of SB0350 by Tim DeRoche, founder and president of Available to All, a nonpartisan watchdog defending equal access to public schools

At Available to All, we defend the fundamental principle that all kids should have equal access to the best public schools. We have argued against strict policies of residential assignment that prevent children from enrolling in high-quality public schools that may be just blocks from their homes.

Strict attendance zone maps and district boundaries create many problems for Maryland families:

- Contributes to the affordable housing crisis, by driving up the price of homes in neighborhoods that are attractive to young families
- Leads to the deterioration of neighborhoods that are boxed out of nearby high-quality schools, as young families move out
- Forces school districts to hire private detectives to conduct residency checks on families who are just trying to find the right public school for their children
- Leads to dramatic inequalities in which the highest-performing public schools are reserved for wealthier families who can afford to pay the distorted price to live in the zone, leading to the development of

Indeed, we have found that the enrollment maps for many coveted public schools mirror the racist redlining maps from the 1930s. This is the case for Roland Park Elementary/Middle School in Baltimore, where 58% of children are reading proficiently. Less than 2 miles away is Walter P. Carter Elementary, where only 16% of the kids are reading proficiently.

Carter families are taxpaying constituents of the Baltimore City Public Schools, but they aren't welcome at a high-performing school less than two miles from their homes and instead are assigned to a school where the vast majority of students are not reading at grade level.

Open enrollment laws like SB0350 have the ability to open up high-quality public schools to more Maryland children.

Before founding Available to All, I wrote the book, *A Fine Line: How Most American Kids Are Kept Out of the Best Public Schools*.

BALTIMORE

ROLAND PARK ELEM./MIDDLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ZONE

