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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

HB14: County Boards of Education - Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation - Information Collection and Reporting Requirements
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee | April 1, 2026
SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

Background: House Bill 14 as amended in the House fails to properly execute the intended goal of the bill – which would require our 24 jurisdictions to report certain bullying, harassment, or intimidation data, if the incident is believed to have been motivated in whole or in substantial part by certain actual or perceived personal characteristics, identification of those personal characteristics.

Written Comments: The Baltimore Jewish Council (BJC) represents the Associated Jewish Federation of Baltimore and all its agencies, as well as the organized Jewish Community of Baltimore. Every child deserves to learn without fear of harassment or intimidation. The goal of this bill is to improve how schools collect and understand data on bullying so that educators and policymakers can identify patterns, target interventions, and cultivate safer, more inclusive learning environments.

Unfortunately, as amended in the House, the bill has become much less effective. We are grateful to the bill sponsor for sitting down with us and working out what we believe would be sufficient amendments to respect some of the changes that the House made while also maintaining the integrity of the bill. **We strongly recommend the adoption of the following amendment – which would remove lines 24-28 on page 4:**

~~24 (I) THERE HAS BEEN A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN INCIDENTS
25 OF BULLYING, HARASSMENT, OR INTIMIDATION FOR STUDENTS IN THAT GROUP
26 OVER THE PREVIOUS SCHOOL YEAR; OR
27 (II) THERE IS A DISPROPORTIONATE INCIDENT RATE OF
28 BULLYING, HARASSMENT, OR INTIMIDATION FOR STUDENTS IN THAT GROUP.~~

These additions from the House substantially limit the impact of the original bill, specifically because there are no legal definitions of "substantial increase" or "disproportionate incident." These terms leave the bill subject to the interpretation, allowing our County Boards to choose not to participate, thus rendering the bill ineffective.

As the state continues to evolve its curriculum, and recognizing that in the past two legislative sessions this body has passed laws requiring Anti-Bias Training in our school systems and County Boards of Education, this data can help to assess the effectiveness of these changes and where there is a need for future adjustments. **For these reasons, we urge a Favorable report with the acceptance of this amendment on HB14.** We thank Sen. Brooks for having this prepared, and for his support in maintaining the integrity of the bill.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of the Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.