

# **Darlene Johnson's Testimony**

Uploaded by: Darlene Johnson

Position: FAV

Good afternoon Honorable Chair Feldman, Honorable Vice Chair Kagan, and Esteemed Members of the Education Energy and Environment Committee. My name is Darlene Johnson, and I am here in support of HB1310.

When I was 17 years old and a senior in high school, my mother died suddenly just months before graduation, prom, finals, and all the milestones that are supposed to celebrate the end of childhood. She was my guide, my safe place, the person who had always believed in me—and suddenly she was gone.

One day I was a normal teenager preparing for my future, and the next day my entire world collapsed. I was devastated. My family was never the same.

I had never experienced loss before. I was still a vulnerable child—completely unprepared for grief of this magnitude. I felt confused, abnormal, and completely lost, while the world expected life to continue as if nothing had happened.

My mother dreamed of seeing me graduate from college. My brother attended Columbia University and my sister attended NYU. As the youngest child, I felt the weight of continuing that legacy and fulfilling the dreams my mother had for me.

But after her death, everything changed. I missed a tremendous amount of school because I simply could not function through the grief. My grades fell dramatically, and at one point I was told I might not graduate with my class.

I was told that I might have to return after graduation to attend summer school just to finish high school. I remember feeling robbed of all the years of hard work I had put in—my academics, extracurricular activities, leadership roles, volunteering, and late nights studying for my future.

At the same time, I was expected to apply to colleges and make life-defining decisions while trying to understand how to live in a world without my mother. The sudden loss of my mother changed the trajectory of my life.

While I ultimately got accepted to college I did not receive a college acceptance until mid-April, and it was not the school my family and I had hoped for. My choices were limited because the context of what I had endured was never fully understood.

A bill like HB1310 would allow colleges and decision-makers to see the human story behind a transcript.

A bill like HB1310 would give students facing unimaginable loss something I did not have—understanding. Grief should never be mistaken for failure. No child navigating devastating grief should have their future judged without context. I respectfully urge you to support HB1310. Thank you.

## **Delegate Coley's Testimony**

Uploaded by: Delegate Coley Delegate Coley

Position: FAV

**DERRICK COLEY**  
*Legislative District 24*  
Prince George's County

Ways and Means Committee

*Subcommittees*

Child Care

Gaming

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland



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**THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES**  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Delegate Derrick L. Coley – District 24**

**Support of House Bill 1310**

Good afternoon Honorable Chair Feldman, Honorable Vice Chair Kagan, and Esteemed Members of the Education Energy and Environment Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present House Bill 1310 Traumatic Loss Transcript Notation.

I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 1310.

House Bill 1310 establishes a process allowing Maryland public high school students to request a transcript notation when they experience a documented traumatic loss. The bill directs local school systems to implement this notation and requires the Maryland State Department of Education to develop standardized language for its use. This legislation focuses on fairness. This legislation focuses on compassion. This legislation focuses on protecting the future of Maryland students.

Traumatic loss can significantly disrupt a young person's life. The death of a parent, guardian, sibling, or close family member can have immediate emotional and academic consequences. Students navigating grief may experience temporary declines in grades, attendance, or academic performance. These impacts may be short-term, but the effects on a student's transcript can last much longer.

House Bill 1310 provides important context. Colleges and scholarship committees rely on transcripts to evaluate a student's academic journey. When a major life event disrupts that journey, admissions officials deserve a fuller understanding of the circumstances. Students deserve the opportunity to have their academic record viewed in context.

This bill recognizes the reality many students face after a traumatic loss. Some young people take on caregiving responsibilities at home. Some support grieving family members. Some must balance emotional recovery with the demands of school. These challenges are real, and they can temporarily affect academic performance.

House Bill 1310 offers a thoughtful and balanced solution. The bill does not change grading policies. It does not alter academic standards. Instead, it allows for a neutral transcript notation explaining extraordinary circumstances. The Maryland State Department of Education will

establish consistent language to ensure the notation is applied responsibly and consistently across school systems.

This legislation promotes fairness in educational opportunities. Students should not lose access to college admissions or scholarship opportunities because of a temporary academic disruption caused by tragedy. This bill protects students at a vulnerable moment while preserving the integrity of the academic record.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 1310.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**X HB1310 Support (Written).pdf**

Uploaded by: Kenzie Funk

Position: FAV



**Testimony in SUPPORT of  
House Bill 1310: Public High Schools – Student Transcripts – Traumatic Loss Notation**

**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

April 1, 2026

At Strong Schools Maryland, we work to support the faithful implementation and full funding of the promises legislated through the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. The Blueprint envisions a public education system where all students can feel safe, supported, and prepared to succeed in school and beyond. For this reason, Strong Schools Maryland offers favorable testimony in support of HB1310 – Public High Schools – Student Transcripts – Traumatic Loss Notation.

HB1310 allows a high school student who has experienced a traumatic loss to request a notation on their official transcript recognizing that loss, with standardized language developed by the State Department of Education. This provision acknowledges that significant personal trauma can have a meaningful impact on a student’s academic experience and performance.

The death of a parent or sibling during childhood or adolescence is one of the most destabilizing experiences a young person can face. Grief can affect concentration, attendance, emotional regulation, and academic outcomes<sup>1</sup>. A transcript notation provides important context for colleges, scholarship committees, and other postsecondary institutions reviewing a student’s record, ensuring that students who experience profound loss are evaluated with appropriate understanding.

We are especially supportive of the amendment to expand the bill so that the traumatic loss notation applies to the death of a parent or a sibling and from any cause, not solely cancer. The death of a parent or sibling at a young age is deeply traumatic regardless of the cause, and limiting recognition to a single circumstance risks exclusion.

By acknowledging the real impact that traumatic loss can have on students’ academic journeys, HB1310 helps ensure that young people are not unfairly disadvantaged during college admissions or other postsecondary opportunities. This is a compassionate and practical step toward recognizing the challenges students face beyond the classroom.

**For these reasons, Strong Schools Maryland urges the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to issue a favorable report on HB1310.**

**Please contact Riya Gupta at [riya@strongschoolsmaryland.org](mailto:riya@strongschoolsmaryland.org) for additional questions.**

1. Liu C, Grotta A, Hiyoshi A, Berg L, Rostila M. School Outcomes Among Children Following Death of a Parent. JAMA Netw Open. 2022;5(4):e223842. Published 2022 Apr 1. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.3842

# **HB1310 Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: sharlimar douglass

Position: FAV



## **HB1310 Public High Schools – Student Transcripts – Traumatic Loss Notation**

**Position: Favorable**

**April 1, 2026**

The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE), a coalition of education advocacy, civil rights, and community-based organizations committed to eliminating racial disparities in Maryland's education system, **offers favorable testimony in support of House Bill 1310.**

### **Why This Bill Is an Equity Issue**

HB 1310 allows high school students who have lost a parent or sibling to reproductive cancer — including breast, cervical, or uterine cancer — to request a traumatic loss notation on their official transcript. This notation provides critical context for college admissions officers, scholarship reviewers, and others evaluating a student's academic record.

This is not a peripheral concern for MAREE. Across Maryland's education landscape, systemic and structural racism and inequality are pervasive— and that includes the ways in which the education system responds to, or fails to respond to, trauma experienced disproportionately by Black and Brown students and families. Black women in Maryland and across the country face significantly higher mortality rates from the cancers named in this bill — breast, cervical, and uterine cancer — compared to their white counterparts. This means Black students are among those most likely to carry the weight of exactly this kind of loss while sitting in a classroom.

When a student loses a parent or sibling, grief reshapes every dimension of their life: their attendance, their concentration, their grades. Yet without a mechanism to provide context, a transcript tells none of that story. What it can appear to tell — to an admissions committee or a scholarship panel — is that the student lacked effort or commitment. For Black and Brown students who already navigate implicit bias in evaluative processes, this silence on the transcript is not neutral. It is a harm.

### **A Student-Centered, Privacy-Affirming Design**

MAREE appreciates that this bill was constructed with student dignity at its center. The notation is entirely opt-in. Privacy is protected through language that frames the circumstance as a "documented compelling personal circumstance" or an "exceptional hardship acknowledgement," shielding sensitive medical details. Students may also choose to accompany the notation with a personal letter, on their own terms and with parental approval if under 18. This approach affirms student voice and autonomy — values at the core of what MAREE envisions for a public education system that is joyful, healthy, equitable, engaging, and culturally affirming.

### **The Counselor Mandate Closes an Equity Gap**

The bill's requirement that school counselors proactively inform eligible students and surviving parents about this option is essential. Without active outreach, access to this notation would almost certainly be uneven — skewing toward students in more resourced schools or families with deeper familiarity with college processes. The counselor notification requirement helps ensure that this protection reaches the students who need it most, regardless of their ZIP code or school system.

HB 1310 passed the House of Delegates 132–0. This unanimity underscores what MAREE has long known: investing in Black and Brown students' education and success creates a stronger future for all of Maryland. Supporting students through grief is not a partisan act — it is a foundational one.

Every student who loses a parent or sibling to cancer and still shows up to school is demonstrating extraordinary resilience. Maryland's public education system should affirm that resilience — not inadvertently penalize it. HB 1310 gives students a meaningful, voluntary tool to ensure their full story can be told. MAREE urges this Committee to report it **favorably**.

peace & truth,  
sharlimar douglass  
Education Justice Advocate & Analyst  
Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE)

**HB1310\_EEE\_MARFY\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Therese Hessler

Position: FAV



April 1, 2026

**House Bill 1310 — Public High Schools — Student Transcripts — Traumatic Loss Notation**

Senate Education, Energy & Environment Committee

**Position:** SUPPORT

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) respectfully submits this testimony in strong support of House Bill 1310.

MARFY’s membership includes licensed private child-placing agencies and community-based providers across Maryland that serve children and youth with complex trauma histories, including those in foster care and other out-of-home placements. These youth often experience multiple losses including loss of family members, guardians, siblings, or other close relationships in addition to the trauma of separation from home.

House Bill 1310 authorizes students who have experienced a qualifying traumatic loss to request a traumatic loss notation on their official high school transcripts, with standard language developed by the State Department of Education. This policy is consistent with trauma-informed educational practice and supports children who otherwise enter postsecondary settings without a means to contextualize disruptions in academic performance or attendance.

Research indicates that academic disruptions are a common impact of trauma. Trauma can lead to difficulties with concentration, attendance, and engagement, yet traditional transcripts do not provide a way to reflect these mitigating circumstances. By allowing a standard, dignified notation, HB 1310 gives students and families a way to communicate context in a manner that higher education institutions and employers can understand.

Importantly, the bill’s requirement for standardized language rather than subjective or ad hoc approaches promotes equity and protects student privacy. Consistent implementation across local school systems will reduce disparities in how trauma histories affect academic records.

For youth who have experienced traumatic loss, this bill is a meaningful step toward greater understanding and opportunity.

MARFY respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 1310.

Thank you for your consideration.

**For more information call or email:**

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**PGCC\_EEE\_HB1310\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Therese Hessler

Position: FAV



# THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

(301) 952-3700  
County Council

**April 1, 2026**

**Senate Education, Energy & Environment Committee**

**House Bill 1310 — Public High Schools — Student Transcripts — Traumatic Loss Notation**

**POSITION: FAVORABLE**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Prince George's County Council, we respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 1310.

HB 1310 provides that a Maryland public high school student who has experienced a traumatic loss including the death of a parent, sibling, or other close family member may request the inclusion of a traumatic loss notation on the student's official academic transcript. The bill also directs the Maryland State Department of Education to develop standardized language for such notations, and requires local school systems to adopt that language upon student request.

While HB1310 is a simple bill, this important legislation will have a meaningful impact on students and their futures. First, it acknowledges that life-altering personal loss can affect a student's academic performance, attendance, and overall school engagement. A student's transcript traditionally a summary of grades and credits should not be blind to real, documented hardship that may have disrupted educational progress.

Second, creating a standardized, dignified notation allows students to share context with postsecondary institutions, scholarship programs, or employers without having to disclose private details in less formal or less equitable ways. Linking personal adversity with academic records in a respectful and controlled manner can help students avoid misinterpretation of their educational history. The standardized language requirement helps ensure equity, consistency, and dignity in how such information is communicated.

Prince George's County has a diverse student population, many of whom experience disproportionate exposure to trauma and loss. HB 1310 empowers students with a mechanism to reflect their lived experiences meaningfully, reducing stigma around trauma and supporting transition to next-level opportunities.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 1310.

Thank you.

*Prepared by: Ashlar Government Relations on behalf of Prince George's County Council*

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