

HB 326 - FAV - MDEM.pdf

Uploaded by: Anna Sierra

Position: FAV



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FAVORABLE
HB 326 Education - Maryland Center for School Safety -
Anonymous Reporting System
Education, Energy, and the Environment

Maryland Department of Emergency Management
Hearing Date: 7 APR 2026

The Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) writes in support of **HB 326 - Education - Maryland Center for School Safety - Anonymous Reporting System**. The bill requires the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) to establish and maintain an anonymous reporting system for threats or concerning behaviours in schools in Maryland.

The Maryland Joint Operations Center (MJOC) within the Department has supported the implementation of the current anonymous reporting system, Safe Schools Maryland (SSMD). The MJOC is the State's 24/7, 365 watch center which receives and processes reports.

MDEM's mission areas include both consequence management and disaster risk reduction. MCSS has identified anonymous reporting systems as a key component to violence prevention and risk reduction, enabling peers, classmates, and other community members to report concerning behavior *before* something happens. The anonymous component of the system assists to overcome barriers to reporting by ensuring those reporting do not have to fear retribution or being ostracized. This is a data-driven system with studies which demonstrate reduction in violence, self-harm and suicide in school systems which have implemented and sustained anonymous reporting systems.

In conclusion, MDEM urges a favorable report of **HB 326 - Education - Maryland Center for School Safety - Anonymous Reporting System**. If you have any questions, please contact Anna Sierra, MDEM legislative liaison: anna.sierra1@maryland.gov.

HB326 Favorable 2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Debi Jasen

Position: FAV

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
House Bill 326
Favorable

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee;

Please give House Bill 326 a favorable report. HB326 codifies an effective program that already exists and is used by all Maryland public schools and some private schools. As it stands now, this program can be eliminated due to budget cuts. It's important for students to be able to anonymously report safety issues in their schools. Please support the continuation for the Maryland Center of School Safety's reporting system. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Debi Jasen
Pasadena, MD

HB 326 MCSS Letter of Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Kimberly Buckheit

Position: FAV

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

Bill:	House Bill 326	Date:	April 7, 2026
Title:	Education - MCSS - Anonymous Reporting System	Committee:	Education, Energy & Environment
Position:	Favorable	Contact:	Kimberly Buckheit kim.buckheit1@maryland.gov 443-902-0622

On behalf of the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS), thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter of support for House Bill 326.

Anonymous reporting systems are the single most effective tool for breaking the "code of silence" that precedes nearly all school attacks. Research confirms that school violence is a detectable process that can be interrupted. By removing the fear of retaliation, these systems allow for early intervention in violence, self-harm, and bullying. Enacting HB 326 secures the operation, confidentiality, and statewide consistency of these tools.

Safe Schools Maryland (SSMD) serves as the state's frontline defense, providing a secure reporting platform for over 1,420 public schools and 200 private facilities. Administered by the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS), the system is monitored 24/7/365 by professional staff through the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM). This ensures that every report receives immediate action, regardless of the hour. Enacting HB 326 is essential to codifying this success, ensuring that every Maryland citizen has access to a reliable, professional method for reporting behaviors of concern. SSMD is a specialized tool and does not replace 911 in active emergencies or 988 for immediate suicidal and other mental health crises; rather, it is a system where concerns are shared and triaged by professionals allowing for mitigation of harm and interventions that increase future success.

The Science of Prevention: Recognizing and Sharing Concerns

Targeted school violence is often preventable because it is rarely a sudden event; it is a behavioral process. Research from the U.S. Secret Service indicates that prior to most incidents, individuals—usually family and friends—recognize warning signs, where an intent to harm is shared via social media, written notes, or verbal threats.¹ Anonymous reporting systems serve as the critical bridge between this knowledge and professional intervention. The results are measurable: administrators report these systems have helped avert potential violence (52%) and suicide crises (73%),² while peer-reviewed studies show that schools utilizing an anonymous reporting system experience a 13.5% reduction in violent incidents.³

¹ Langman, Peter, Warning Signs: Identifying School Shooters Before They Strike, Langman Psychological Associates, LLC, 2021.

² Planty, M., Banks, D., Lindquist, C., Cartwright, J., & Witwer, A. (2020). Tip Lines for School Safety: A National Portrait of Tip Line Use. Research Triangle Park, NC: RTI International.

<https://www.rti.org/publication/tip-lines-school-safety-national-portrait-tip-line-use/fulltext.pdf>

³ Hsieh, H. F., et al. (2022). Journal of School Violence, 21(4), 413–428.



MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

Bystanders Become "Upstanders"

To be effective, reporting systems must overcome the "code of silence" fueled by fear of retaliation or social stigma. By providing a truly anonymous mechanism, we empower people to move from bystanders to "upstanders." This information feeds directly into the Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM)⁴ process, which is a supportive framework designed to identify behaviors of concern and provide early intervention. Unlike traditional discipline, this process focuses on addressing grievances and risk indicators to support students in distress.

Maintaining System Integrity

While concerns about misuse exist, data indicates that false reporting is rare—typically involving less than 3% of tips—and decreases significantly once proper training occurs.⁵ When individuals see that tips are handled with professional discretion and lead to genuine help, the integrity of the system is reinforced. School leaders consistently indicate that the ability to respond effectively to bullying and other safety concerns outweighs the minimal risk of misuse, making anonymous reporting systems an essential tool for maintaining a positive school climate.⁶

Preserving Anonymity to Increase Reporting

Research from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and the U.S. Secret Service underscores that anonymity is a critical factor in encouraging bystander reporting; without a guarantee of confidentiality, individuals are significantly less likely to come forward with information regarding potential threats.⁷ HB 326 addresses these concerns by explicitly mandating that all records and information related to the system are confidential and exempt from disclosure under the Maryland Public Information Act.

Keeping our schools safe depends on individuals feeling safe enough to stand up and speak up. By codifying anonymous reporting through HB 326, you are not just providing a tip line; you are promoting a culture that empowers people to **'See it, Hear it, and Report it.'**

Thank you again for taking the time to consider the above information, and MCSS respectfully requests that the committee give House Bill 326 a favorable report.

⁴ National Threat Assessment Center, Averting Targeted School Violence, Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools, U.S. Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security, (2021).

<https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2021-03/USSS%20Averting%20Targeted%20School%20Violence.2%2021.03.pdf>

⁵ Dorothy L. Espelage et al., "Implementation of Tiplines and Reporting Apps for School Safety: A Qualitative Analysis of Parent and School Personnel Perspectives," *Journal of School Violence* 20 no. 3 (2021): 336-350, and Al Stein-Seroussi et al., "Nevada SafeVoice," Final report to the National Institute of Justice, award number 2016-CK-BX-0007, April 2024, NCJ 308905.

⁶ Planty et al., *supra* note 2.

⁷ Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency & U.S. Secret Service, *Improving School Safety Through Bystander Reporting: A Toolkit for Strengthening*, Department of Homeland Security, (May 2023).

https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2023-05/cisa-usss-k-12-bystander-reporting-toolkit-508_final.pdf



HB828_MSEA_Lemle_FAV_04.07.pdf

Uploaded by: Paul Lemle

Position: FAV

**Favorable
House Bill 828
State Board of Education - Membership - Educational Support Member**

**Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
April 7, 2026**

**Paul Lemle
MSEA President**

The Maryland State Education Association strongly supports House Bill 828. This legislation allows for the addition of more educator voices on the State Board of Education. As passed in the House, it would designate a seat for an elected education support professional on the State Board of Education.

MSEA represents 76,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools and community colleges, teaching and supporting our almost 900,000 K-12 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA represents more than 44 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Seven years ago, this body recognized that when the State Board of Education is setting policies and regulations for our schools, it was necessary to have an educator at the table – someone who is in a classroom every day. As such, we have a designated teacher member on the State Board, who provides an essential perspective on how Board decisions will affect teachers' day-to-day operations and students' learning.

To fully represent educator voices on the State Board, we must include the perspectives of an education support professional. Education support professionals are often underrecognized for their essential contributions to our schools even though they are integral by providing daily critical services that enable the operations of our schools. Imagine a school with no bus drivers dropping off kids, no front desk staff checking them in, no school nurse responding to scrapes and stomachaches, no food service staff serving breakfast and lunch, and no paraeducators assisting students and teachers. It wouldn't look much like a school at all.



This bill would not increase the size of the State Board, nor would it displace any other specialized appointees. Representation of education support professionals is a vital component of MSEA's ESP Bill of Rights work. We are interested in working with the General Assembly, the State Board of Education, and any other partners to either guarantee that representation or otherwise provide a pathway for such an appointment in the future. We continue to fight to lift up the voices of educators on the State Board.

For these reasons, we urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on House Bill 828.

HB0326 - State Board & MSDE - Support - 4.7.26.doc

Uploaded by: Yvonne Harper

Position: FAV

TO: Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment

BILL: House Bill (HB) 326 – Education – Maryland Center for School Safety – Anonymous Reporting System

DATE: April 7, 2026

POSITION: Support

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) provides this Letter of Support regarding **HB 326**. The proposed legislation codifies [Safe Schools Maryland](#), an existing anonymous reporting system operated by the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS), in the Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland. The bill requires the Center to maintain an anonymous reporting system, establish standardized operational guidelines, and provide training for school personnel. It mandates that all local school systems participate by July 1, 2027, unless they operate a substantially similar system and notify the Center. Additionally, the bill strengthens confidentiality by explicitly exempting related records from public disclosure under the Maryland Public Information Act.

The Maryland State Department of Education supports HB 326, which codifies the existing statewide anonymous reporting system, Safe Schools Maryland, into law, transforming the current program from a voluntary initiative into a statutory requirement with clear compliance timelines and enhanced privacy protections. This legislation ensures that Maryland continues to provide a secure and confidential mechanism for reporting threats, concerning behaviors, and mental health issues in schools. Research confirms that targeted school violence is largely preventable when early warning signs, often shared through “leakage,” are reported and acted upon. Anonymous reporting systems overcome barriers such as fear of retaliation and the “code of silence,” encouraging students and community members to share critical information. National studies show that tip lines prevent violent incidents and self-harm, reduce bullying, and foster safer, more connected school environments.

HB 326 guarantees the viability of Safe Schools Maryland by requiring operational guidelines, standardized training, and confidentiality protections under the Maryland Public Information Act. These measures strengthen trust in the system and ensure consistent implementation across school systems. The bill also reinforces Maryland’s commitment to proactive safety and wellness interventions, including behavioral threat assessment and mental health support. By codifying this program, Maryland affirms its dedication to safeguarding students and staff, preventing violence, and promoting positive school climates statewide.

The State Board and MSDE respectfully request consideration of these comments as **HB 326** is discussed and deliberated. For further information, please contact Laurel Cratsley at laurel.cratsley@maryland.gov.

HB 326 xover - Education - Maryland Center for Sch

Uploaded by: Zaniah Anderson

Position: FAV



PSSAM
Public School Superintendents' Association
OF MARYLAND

Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director
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BILL: HB 326

TITLE: Education - Maryland Center for School Safety - Anonymous Reporting System

DATE: April 7, 2026

POSITION: Favorable

COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **supports** House Bill 326.

This bill requires the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) to develop and administer an anonymous reporting system that (1) coordinates the receipt of information relating to a school or student safety concern in a manner that maintains confidentiality and (2) provides a mechanism for any reported information to be forwarded to school or other appropriate officials. A custodian of public records under the Maryland Public Information Act (PIA) must deny inspection of any information or materials related to the anonymous reporting system.

(https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2026RS/fnotes/bil_0006/hb0326.pdf)

School safety is a top priority for every superintendent in Maryland. Over the past several years, local school systems have invested significantly in comprehensive safety frameworks that include behavioral threat assessment teams, mental health services, strong school-law enforcement partnerships, and preventive education for students and families. Anonymous reporting systems are a critical component of that layered approach.

Maryland's existing program - Safe Schools Maryland - is already in operation statewide and is used by every public school system. Several local systems also had internal reporting platforms or similar mechanisms in place prior to the establishment of the statewide system. In our experience, these tools have become essential for identifying concerns early and responding appropriately before situations escalate.

Anonymous reporting systems work because they address a well-documented reality - students often know when a peer is struggling or expressing harmful intent, but they hesitate to report it. Fear of retaliation, social pressure, or being labeled discourages disclosure. Providing a secure, anonymous method for sharing concerns helps overcome that barrier and fosters a culture of shared responsibility for safety.

Importantly, these systems are not limited to preventing acts of violence. In practice, many tips involve students experiencing depression, suicidal ideation, bullying, substance misuse, or other mental health challenges. When reports are received, they are routed through established Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management processes. The focus is not punishment - it is intervention, support, and connection to services.

Superintendents across Maryland have seen firsthand the value of this approach. Tips have allowed school teams to intervene early, provide counseling, engage families, and coordinate with community partners when necessary. In many cases, the result is not discipline, but support and stabilization.

Equally important, the bill protects the confidentiality of reporting. Anonymity is foundational to the effectiveness of any tip line. Students and community members must trust that their identities will not be disclosed. The bill's exemption of system records from disclosure under the Public Information Act appropriately balances transparency with the overriding public interest in safety, mental health intervention, and suicide prevention. Without those protections, reporting would decline and the system's effectiveness would be compromised.

We also note that participation in the statewide system does not eliminate local flexibility. School systems retain authority to establish procedures, align responses with their existing threat assessment protocols, and ensure appropriate coordination with administrators, school resource officers, and student support staff. The statewide infrastructure simply provides a reliable, professionally monitored platform operating 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

HB 326 provides important legislative validation to ensure the long-term viability and consistency of this statewide resource. Codifying the program formally recognizes its existence, clarifies the Maryland Center for School Safety's responsibility to establish operational guidelines, and ensures consistent standards across systems.

For the reasons stated above, PSSAM requests a **favorable report** on House Bill 326.