



THE HEIGHTS SCHOOL

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March 31, 2026

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Maryland Senate
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB0649

Dear Members of the Committee:

I am writing as the Headmaster of The Heights School, a private school in Potomac, Maryland serving families with students in grades 3rd – 12th. We moved to our current location in 1978 and have enjoyed serving students and families from Maryland ever since.

It has recently come to my attention that the Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment (“the Committee”) is considering Maryland House Bill 649 (H.B. 649). While, as a life-long educator, I share the H.B. 649 authors’ desire to advance educational opportunities among Maryland students, I believe the current drafting of H.B. 649 creates a number of unintended outcomes which the Committee should take into consideration as it reviews the proposal.

These outcomes include the potential violation of U.S. Constitutional Rights afforded to private educational institutions, particularly educational institutions with religious commitments. Our school, along with many other schools in Maryland, provide parents with an educational environment for their children centered on deeply held religious tenets, including beliefs on marriage and human sexuality. Educational institutions have long been afforded the rights to educate in such a manner by the U.S. Constitution. H.B. 649 would directly interfere with our ability to operate in a manner consistent with these tenets, and would thereby violate our U.S. Constitutional rights by forcing schools, such as ours, to decide between abandoning deeply held religious beliefs or facing potential crippling and unsustainable liabilities. In essence, we could no longer operate as we would either be a school that abandons our religious tenets and is no longer attractive to our community, or one that could not afford the imposed penalties for teaching according to our religious tenets. I understand there are many schools in Maryland that share these same concerns.

For the above reasons, I respectfully ask the Committee to take the necessary time to consider all the potential unintended consequences of H.B. 649, and ultimately reject passage of H.B. 649 out of the Committee. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Alvaro J. de Vicente
Headmaster

CC: The Honorable Brian J. Feldman