

House Bill 649:
Advancing Equal Educational Opportunities for All Students in Maryland
Hearing before the House Committee on Government, Labor, and Elections
February 24, 2026
Position: FAVORABLE

HB649 would protect students from intentional discrimination and from policies or practices that have an unjustified discriminatory impact. HB649 mirrors federal anti-discrimination that has existed for decades. Current Maryland law doesn't cover higher education, only K-12. Higher ed students must rely on federal protections through the OCR. However, the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has been effectively closed by the current administration in the last year placing several employees on leave and closing individual offices. There's no guarantee this will be reversed during this or future administrations.

Black students, students with disabilities, and other historically marginalized groups are disproportionately impacted by exclusionary discipline and unequal treatment in schools. Too often, families lack meaningful recourse when discrimination occurs. HB 649 would provide a critical tool to address these inequities, promote transparency, and ensure that all students are afforded the protection they deserve.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a **favorable** report on House Bill 649.

Katie York
YorkForHarford@gmail.com