



**HOUSE GOVERNMENT, LABOR AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE**

**HOUSE BILL 649**

**ADVANCING EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS IN MARYLAND**

**FEBRUARY 24, 2026**

**OPPOSE**

Maryland CAPE is our state's chapter and one of 40 state chapters of the Council for American Private Education. Our network includes the Catholic, Christian, Evangelical Lutheran, Friends, Independent, Jewish, Lutheran, Montessori, Muslim, and Seventh Day Adventist school communities. We speak on behalf of over 138,000 nonpublic school students attending over one thousand nonpublic schools across our great state of Maryland. We speak today in opposition to House Bill 649.

The importance of ensuring that all students are protected from discrimination has long been a subject of legislation in the General Assembly. In 2022, Maryland CAPE engaged in extensive, good-faith discussion and advocacy with a broad group of education advocates on [House Bill 850](#) of that year's session. As a result of those discussions, the final version of that nondiscrimination bill ensured that the law would respect a school's independence in a variety of critical areas while protecting all individuals from discrimination and unjust treatment.

Our schools have strict policies ensuring that the rights of students and parents are respected, while preserving the nature of the mission of each school. It is deeply disappointing that the previous agreement is now being revisited, and that the independence of our schools should be called into question.

Many of our schools are faith-based, and are careful to remain loyal to their deeply held religious beliefs. We are deeply concerned by the idea that religious and faith-based schools will now have their decisions judged by a State commission that will not understand and appreciate the religious considerations of the school. We are further concerned that this legislation will open the door to disaffected parents or students to pursue lengthy legal action against a school or institution out of malice. Even if and when such actions are determined to be baseless, the cost in time, stress, reputation and resources to our schools may be significant and damaging.

We therefore respectfully request that the policies and standing agreed upon in 2022 are respected and preserved as the standard, and we ask that you issue an UNFAVORABLE report on House Bill 649.

Thank you.

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