

Testimony in Support of HB566
House Judiciary Committee — Hearing: Thursday, February 19, 2026 (1:00 p.m.)

Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Grady O’Rear. I am a Maryland resident, submitting this testimony **in support of HB 566**.

HB 566 is a practical, carefully drawn protection against a specific modern threat: doxxing—the distribution of a student’s personal identifying information or images, without consent, with intent or knowledge it will be used to harm the student, or with reckless disregard for the risk of harm. I support HB566, and I am in favor of amending it to provide for civil—rather than criminal—penalties.

This bill matters because it protects student safety without undermining free speech. Students should never have to choose between participating in civic life and fearing that their home address, phone number, or personal images will be weaponized against them. HB 566 targets harmful conduct—not viewpoints, not peaceful protest, not criticism of government, and not constitutionally protected debate.

I speak from experience. Many years ago as a student at the University of Maryland, I—and many other students across the country—protested the war in Vietnam and the bombing of Cambodia and Laos. Those protests were instrumental in helping to stop the carnage and to confront actions widely viewed as unlawful and immoral. History shows that organized, lawful public dissent is often essential to correcting government wrongdoing.

That principle remains true today. When the federal government acts in ways that violate international and/or domestic law, it is especially important that residents, citizens, and local and state governments can stand in solidarity—openly and safely. Doxxing is a form of intimidation designed to silence participation. HB 566 reduces that threat and helps preserve the conditions under which free speech is real, not merely theoretical.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a **Favorable Report** on HB 566.

Thank you for your consideration.

Grady O’Rear

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Practical committee note (so your submission conforms): for this committee, oral testimony is typically **2 minutes**, and sign-up/written testimony submission opens **two business days before the hearing (8:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.)** through a MyMGA account.