



**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House of Delegates
Ways and Means Committee
April 1, 2026**

**Board of Education
of Howard County**

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SB0685: UNFAVORABLE

State Department of Education - Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct Model Response Policy – Requirements

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) opposes **State Department of Education - Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct Model Response Policy - Requirements** as a one-size-fits-all policy mandate on school system responses to situations that are unique, varied, and sensitive in nature.

As originally introduced, SB0685 raised serious concerns with local school systems including requiring communications and providing relevant resources in certain cases of a teacher/staff removal which could alert students (beyond those who may be directly involved in the incident) and the community to details of an allegation which are unfounded and still under investigation. Removal of a teacher/staff member is a personnel matter and therefore there are implications for commenting on ongoing legal matters, often requiring limited information to be provided publicly. Especially given the above, communications about a teacher/staff member removal are currently addressed on a case-by-case basis to account for varying factors. School systems would have also experience administrative burdens under the original requirements to create, maintain, and update website data with precise care not to reveal child abuse, personnel, and student information – all of which is confidential under other areas of state and federal law. In some cases, even the inclusion of the name of a school involved in a public report could inadvertently reveal identifying information.

While simplified as amended by the Senate before passage to this Committee, SB0685 remains a mandate on local school system policy. The bill is unnecessary as school systems already address sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, and sexual harassment under current law and federal requirements. It is unclear, for instance, how the proposed after-action review would overlap with the Department of Social Services investigation as well as school-level investigations conducted following the conclusion of DSS review. The required retention of all email and electronic documents of a school system – not specific to an incident or investigation as written in the amendments – is also misaligned to current records retention policies which focus on the content of a record rather than the format.

For these reasons, we urge an UNFAVORABLE report on SB0685 from this Committee.