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Ways and Means Committee

Subcommittees

Early Childhood and
Special Education

Revenues



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

H.B. 0198 – School Systems – Reportable Offenses – Notification of Student as Suspect

Esteemed Members of the House Ways and Means Committee and the House Judiciary Committee:

I respectfully request a favorable report on H.B. 198: *School Systems – Reportable Offenses – Notification of Student as Suspect*.

In the summer of 2022, a young autistic woman named Kayla was brutally raped and murdered in Harford County by a juvenile. While law enforcement awaited DNA confirmation to move forward with charges, the juvenile suspect was permitted to return to high school. Due to existing State laws that prohibit a clear chain of communication, no one at the school or local education agency level was aware that a student was a suspect in a violent felony investigation. As a result, school administrators were unable to take proactive steps to ensure the safety of students, staff, or even the juvenile involved.

As a father of a special needs child enrolled in Harford County Public Schools, learning these details was deeply concerning. That concern is what brings me before you today to present this legislation. Under current Maryland law, school systems are not notified when a student is identified as a suspect in a felony or crime of violence, nor are they informed if a student is later cleared. This lack of communication presents risks not only to other students and school personnel, but also to the juvenile suspect themselves.

H.B. 198 addresses this gap by establishing a narrow, controlled notification pathway. The bill requires law enforcement agencies to notify the State's Attorney when a student is identified as a suspect in an act that would constitute a felony or crime of violence if committed by an adult. Upon receiving that notification, the State's Attorney is permitted, but not required, to notify the local superintendent or their designee. Importantly, if a student is later determined to no longer be a suspect, that update must also be communicated through the same channel.

This approach preserves prosecutorial discretion, respects juvenile confidentiality, and ensures that only a limited group of appropriate school officials receive this information. At the same time, it equips school systems with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions regarding safety, supervision, and educational programming while an investigation is ongoing.

Had this framework been in place during Kayla's case, school administrators would have been aware of the circumstances and able to take measured, preventative steps to protect students, while still safeguarding the juvenile's right to an education.

In closing, I believe we can all agree that student safety is paramount. Ensuring that a select group of individuals receives timely, appropriate information allows schools to fulfill their responsibility to protect students while maintaining fairness, discretion, and due process.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mike Griffith', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Delegate Mike Griffith
District 35A, Cecil and Harford Counties
Vice Chair, Maryland Veterans Caucus, Maryland General Assembly-House of Delegates