



House Ways and Means Committee

February 25, 2026

House Bill 901 – *Education – Public School Students – Recognition of External Diagnosis of Autism*

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP) is a statewide association representing more than 1,100 pediatricians and allied pediatric and adolescent healthcare practitioners in the State and is a strong and established advocate promoting the health and safety of all the children we serve. On behalf of MDAAP, we submit this letter of **support** for House Bill 901. The bill seeks to ensure that public schools recognize and meaningfully consider external diagnostic evaluations of autism provided by qualified healthcare professionals.

Many families pursue developmental evaluations outside the school system because of concerns about their child’s behavior or developmental trajectory that may not be observed within the school environment. Too often, however, when parents share these external evaluations with their child’s school team, the findings and recommendations are not fully reviewed or incorporated into educational planning, particularly when the child appears to be performing adequately during the school day.

As pediatricians, we regularly evaluate children who expend tremendous effort to “hold it together” at school, only to return home overwhelmed and exhausted. Families frequently report significant distress after school hours, including emotional outbursts, rigidity, and high levels of anxiety. These behaviors reflect the child’s genuine struggle to cope with sensory, social, or communication challenges throughout the day – challenges that may not be outwardly visible to teachers.

House Bill 901 addresses this gap by requiring schools to acknowledge external diagnostic assessments, review the accompanying recommendations, conduct any additional evaluations they deem appropriate, and engage parents in meaningful discussions about findings and potential supports. This bill does not diminish the role of school-based assessments; rather, it ensures that all relevant information, especially clinical evaluations reflecting a child’s functioning across settings, is considered.

We recognize that schools face significant demands and resource constraints. However, the burden of system limitations cannot fall on children and families who find themselves caught between clinical recommendations and school-based perceptions. When healthcare providers identify autism and offer targeted recommendations, families deserve the assurance that these insights will be taken seriously by their child’s educational team. For these reasons, the MDAAP urges a **favorable report on House Bill 901**.

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