



Informational Testimony for

House Bill 14: County Boards of Education – Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation – Information Collection and Reporting Requirements

House Ways and Means Committee

January 29, 2026

At Strong Schools Maryland, we work to support the faithful implementation and full funding of the promises legislated through the landmark Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. The Blueprint envisions a public education system where all students can feel safe and supported to learn and thrive in their school community. Central to that vision is addressing the systemic inequities that disproportionately impact historically marginalized students, including Black and Brown students, Multilingual learners, students with disabilities, LGBTQ+ students, and students from low income communities. For these reasons, **Strong Schools Maryland offers informational testimony for HB 14 – County Boards of Education – Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation – Information Collection and Reporting Requirements.**

House Bill 14 takes a step towards greater transparency and accountability by strengthening how we collect and publicly report data on bullying and harassment. The proposed legislation aims to add a component Bullying Report Form that would specify if the bullying incident is believed to have been motivated by actual or perceived characteristics of the impacted students. The legislation then requires that each County Board publish the disaggregated data on their website. By requiring this disaggregated data collection and reporting, this bill aims to illuminate patterns of harm that often remain hidden when data is aggregated. Most importantly, the intent of the bill is for school systems and counties to better understand how bias based bullying and harassment affects students and allocate actual resources where they are needed in order to address it in an equitable manner.

Safe school environments are a foundational component of educational equity. When students experience bullying or harassment due to race, disability, gender identity, immigration status, or socioeconomic background, it directly undermines their feelings of inclusion, safety, sense of belonging, and academic engagement. HB14 aligns with the Blueprint as its intent is to target supports to protect students well being in schools. We can not begin to address systemic discrimination and interpersonal harassment and bullying, if we do not know who is being impacted.

While we support the intent of the bill, we urge the Committee to carefully consider possible unintended consequences of implementing such a policy. Key considerations include the following:

- Accurately identifying motivating characteristics requires trauma-informed practices. Without adequate resources and training of staff responsible for identifying the “actual or perceived” personal characteristics, there is a risk of inconsistent/biased reporting and/or underreporting, particularly in communities where trust between families and school systems is fragile.
- While we support the collection and disaggregation of this data, we also urge for the prioritization of student privacy, especially in smaller communities where individuals may be more identifiable.
- Protecting privacy should not limit schools’ ability to respond to harm. We encourage the collection of detailed school-level data, even when not publicly published, so districts can identify patterns, partner with directed communities, and direct resources and interventions where they are most needed.

With thoughtful implementation support, HB14 can serve as a powerful tool for resources allocation, accountability, and student well-being and safety.

Please contact Kenzie Funk at kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org for additional questions.