

**Testimony in Opposition to HB0459:  
State Board of Education and State Superintendent of Schools - Enforcement Procedures  
- Alterations**

February 11, 2026

To the Chair, Vice Chair, and Esteemed Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Emily Shaw and I am a parent who has sent a child through the Maryland school system. One major reason that I am delighted my family has been part of Maryland's schools is because of Maryland's strong dedication to inclusiveness and non-discrimination in education. This protection was strengthened in 2024 with the passage of Maryland's Freedom to Read law, which came about in response to a rise in efforts to ban books that celebrate diversity. While Florida leads the way in local book bans, with nearly [9000 titles removed from local schools](#), the Maryland Library Association noted that book challenges in Maryland [had increased 130%](#) in the five years prior to the passage of the law.

Freedom to Read supports the idea that a small subset of people should not be able to dictate what books are made available in the school library. However, that is the strategy that has taken root in some school districts. The Harford County Board of Education listened to a small subset of people and took a secret vote to ban the book Flamer [over the unanimous decision of an appointed review committee of teachers, librarians, and community members](#) as well as the school superintendent. When the Maryland State Board of Education overruled the Harford County Board of Education's decision to ban the book, it was a correct protection of students' rights to access books that reflect the multiplicity and true diversity of human experience, not just the preferences of those with a specific perspective.

HB 459 is an effort to reduce the power of the Maryland State Board of Education to overrule local discriminatory decisions. Maryland's students are lucky to have the protection of their state, regardless of what local dynamics might be arising in opposition to state-level policies of inclusion and non-discrimination. The bill before you seeks to work to strip this protection from students. Please oppose passage of HB 459.