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Environment and Transportation
Committee

Chair, Non-Energy Utilities
Subcommittee

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony: HB14 - County Boards of Education - Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation - Information Collection and Reporting Requirements

Committee: Ways and Means

Hearing Date: January 29, 2026

Position: Favorable

Good afternoon Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and members of the Ways and Means committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present this bill today.

I am Delegate Foley, and I am presenting HB14, which amends existing law to ensure hate-bias incident data that is already being reported by K-12 public school systems will now be broken down by targeted victim groups and posted on a school system's website.

Currently, state law requires school systems to have a hate-bias reporting form. While these forms vary by school system, they ultimately provide information on the perceived nature of bias incidents along with other information about the alleged incidents. This information is ultimately compiled in aggregate and sent to different entities, including the Attorney General's office, which issues an annual statewide report.

However, when the information gets to the Attorney General's office, it is expressed as a percentage of total bullying and harassment incidents, rather than in raw numbers. The Office of the Attorney General indicated that it is sometimes challenging for their office to get these numbers — they aren't readily available to the public.

The bill before you would simply cause school systems to disaggregate the information they have collected and report the raw numbers of hate-bias incidents broken down by targeted victim groups. In other words, a school system's report — which can be as simple as one page or a chart — would show the raw number of antisemitic, anti-black, anti-lgbtq+, misogynistic, anti-immigrant, and other hate incidents, for example.

Montgomery County Public Schools is one school system that makes these data points available. Other school systems do not report these numbers in a way that's easily accessible to the public.

In 2024, there were 291 school-related hate incidents, roughly 1.6 per school day, in Montgomery County. Notably, of the 291 school-related bias incident reports, 60 incidents involved a swastika, and 16 included references to Hitler and/or the Nazi salute. In Montgomery County Public Schools, 43% of 2024 hate incidents targeted Black students. From August 2023 to March 2024, 10% of hate-bias incidents in Montgomery County Public Schools targeted LGBTQ+ students.

All school systems have this data. This bill would require them to break it down by targeted victim groups and post it on their websites. The timeline for posting this data fits in with the existing timeline that school systems already must abide by.

To be clear, these reports would contain raw numbers by system. There would not be any identifying personal information or a school-by-school breakdown.

We've been grateful to get input with various stakeholders in drafting this bill, including the Office of the Attorney General, the Jewish Community Relations Council, the Baltimore Jewish Council, ADL, the Maryland Center for School Safety, Maryland Association of Boards of Education, former President of the Montgomery County Board of Education Julie Yang, the Maryland Civil Rights Commission, State Police, MSEA, and others.

This bill is endorsed by the Latino Caucus and Jewish Caucus and has other support you will hear and read about today.

Those discussions did not reveal any opposition to this bill. All agreed that having this information is useful and needed. It would help school systems better direct resources to combat hate of various groups; would enable parents and community members to have easily accessible information regarding hate in their school system; and overall would reveal what type of hate is occurring in our school systems.

This bill has wide support from stakeholders on all sides of this issue. The bill simply amends existing law. It fits in seamlessly with existing practices without adding an excessive burden to school administrators. Having this data is another step in ensuring our school systems are safer for all.

I urge a favorable report on HB14, and I am happy to answer any questions.