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**WOMEN LEGISLATORS OF MARYLAND**  
**THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**2/18/2026**

**To: Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Chair**

**Delegate Jessica Feldmark, Vice Chair**

**Ways and Means Committee**

The Maryland Women's Caucus is proud to express its support for **HB 0901 – Education – Public School Students – Recognition of External Diagnosis of Autism.**

HB 0901 amends § 8-404 to ensure that public schools recognize external autism diagnoses and provide timely, appropriate supports so that students with autism have equal access to education. Under this bill, school systems are required to accept an autism diagnosis made by a qualified medical, mental health, or educational professional until the school completes its own initial evaluation. During this period, schools must provide necessary services and accommodations to the student.

HB 0901 ensures that students do not experience unnecessary delays in receiving critical support. Recognizing an external diagnosis allows schools to implement specialized instructional strategies, including sensory supports, structured routines, and clear, explicit instruction that are essential for students with autism. Early recognition also enhances student safety, as children with autism are often particularly vulnerable to bullying and social isolation. Awareness enables school staff to better protect these students and foster inclusive school environments that value neurodiversity.

Educators are frequently among the first to observe early indicators of autism and rely on accurate diagnostic information to deploy appropriate resources and interventions. HB 0901 clarifies that school systems should not postpone accommodations or services while awaiting internal evaluations once a qualified professional has made a diagnosis. Prompt intervention is critical to supporting student learning, emotional well-being, and long-term educational outcomes.

This legislation promotes equity, prevents unnecessary barriers to support, and affirms the importance of early and informed responses in educational settings. By ensuring continuity of care and recognition, HB 0901 protects autistic students from stigma and disruption while supporting their development and success.

For these reasons, the Maryland Women's Caucus respectfully urges a **favorable report** on HB 0901.