

**Testimony in Opposition of  
House Bill 868  
Baltimore City – Public Middle Schools –  
Instruction on the Consequences of a Felony Murder Conviction**

**February 25, 2026**

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners (the Board) understands the concern that the sponsor has for ensuring that our children in Baltimore City know the law and consequences of breaking laws before being placed in unfortunate situations. However, the Board must oppose HB 868- Baltimore City - Public Middle Schools - Course on Consequences of a Felony Murder Conviction because the sponsor is mandating curriculum, an area of authority the legislature has given to the Maryland State Board of Education/Maryland State Department of Education. In addition, implementing such a curriculum in a school setting for grades 6 through 8 (especially by the upcoming 2027-2028 school year) seems not practical and the school setting may not be the most appropriate place for such a singular curriculum.

Curriculum must be grounded in evidenced based research and must have a component for assessing the curriculum to determine its effectiveness. It takes months to develop appropriate curriculum that is typical for a school. The curriculum envisioned in this legislation, targeting 6 to 8 graders is very much atypical and not something that can be “bought off of a shelf.”

The school system would also need to find and hire teachers in this very specific subject area. We already have a teacher shortage in Maryland in basic core subjects. The Maryland State Department of Education and the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) have publicly confirmed a teacher shortage and the need to find more robust ways to recruit for the profession, part of the necessary components of the Blueprint.

In Maryland the legislature has authorized the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to work with local school systems to develop and implement appropriate curriculum. In Maryland, the legislature does not mandate curriculum. MSDE would need sufficient time to develop standards for the new curriculum and this certainly is not enough time. Additionally, the Maryland State Board of Education establishes State content frameworks, state assessment standards, and minimum state graduation requirements, while each local board and school system implement locally-developed curriculum to ensure that the state content frameworks are followed, student performance standards are met, and students are prepared to meet

graduation requirements. This legislation does not take into effect any of the processes for developing curriculum. Furthermore, this legislation would require the school system to adjust the current course offerings for students in grades 6 through 8 which.

For the foregoing reasons, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners oppose House Bill 868 and urges an unfavorable report.

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