

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 655

Education – Student Behavior – Parent and Guardian Notice and Required Counseling (Parent and Guardian Accountability Act)

Position: FAVORABLE

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I respectfully submit this written testimony in strong support of House Bill 655, the Parent and Guardian Accountability Act.

HB 655 establishes a clear, reasonable, and structured response when a student engages in repeated violent and disruptive behavior in public schools. After two or more incidents in a school year, the principal must notify the parent or guardian in writing and require participation in counseling with the child. If the parent refuses to seek and participate in counseling after notice and referral to resources, the bill provides for limited court intervention, with community service as a potential consequence.

This bill is not punitive — it is preventive.

Why This Legislation Is Necessary

Maryland educators and students are facing growing classroom instability caused by repeated violent and disruptive incidents. Teachers cannot teach effectively, and students cannot learn safely, when serious behavioral issues go unaddressed.

HB 655 recognizes a fundamental principle:

Schools cannot do this alone. Parents must be engaged partners in correcting repeated misconduct.

The bill triggers intervention only after two or more incidents in a single school year. It then:

- Requires written notice
- Mandates participation in counseling
- Provides referrals to community resources
- Allows limited accountability if a parent refuses to engage

This is a measured and graduated response focused on correction — not punishment.

Evidence from Other States

Several states have implemented parental accountability and mandatory intervention frameworks that demonstrate the value of structured parental engagement.

Texas

Texas law allows courts to require parents to attend counseling or parenting programs when students engage in misconduct or habitual truancy. Districts utilizing these interventions have reported reductions in repeat disciplinary referrals and improved parental participation.

Florida

Florida statutes authorize required parental involvement in cases of repeated student misconduct and truancy. Counties implementing structured intervention programs tied to court authority have seen improved compliance and fewer recurring behavioral incidents.

California

California juvenile courts may order parents to attend counseling or parenting programs when minors engage in repeated delinquent behavior. The emphasis is restorative — requiring engagement and services rather than incarceration — similar to HB 655's limited community service provision.

The consistent lesson across these states is clear:
When parents are formally brought into the accountability process, outcomes improve.

Safeguards and Reasonableness

HB 655 includes important guardrails:

- It applies only after repeated incidents.
- It requires referral to community counseling resources.
- It does not impose jail time or fines.
- It authorizes community service as a proportional consequence.
- It focuses on parental participation in counseling — not punishment of the child.

The state has a legitimate and compelling interest in maintaining safe educational environments. Courts have long recognized that reasonable parental responsibility statutes are constitutional when tied to child welfare and public safety interests.

Restoring Balance in Our Schools

This bill supports:

- Safe classrooms
- Teacher retention
- Student learning environments
- Early behavioral intervention
- Shared responsibility between families and schools

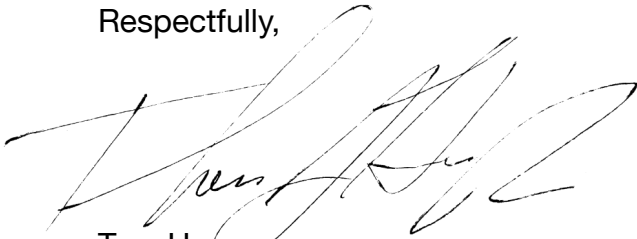
Maryland must send a clear message that repeated violent and disruptive behavior requires meaningful intervention — and that parental engagement is not optional.

HB 655 is a common-sense, prevention-focused policy that strengthens families, protects classrooms, and supports educators.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 655.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Henry', written in a cursive style.

Tom Henry
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