

2/13/2020-Testimony in support of HB 725
Lisa Cline

Dear Esteemed Representatives,

I strongly support bill HB 725, which requires that Maryland's students learn handwriting and cursive. These life skills are critical to a person's ability to communicate and self-express.

I remember the year I *knew* I wanted to be a writer. It was fourth grade in Ms. Sorensen's class in the suburbs of Connecticut. Every day, she asked us to "free write" in a journal for about 20 minutes. We wrote about difficult parts of our day (being bullied by the 'soccer girls') or about daydreams and movies we'd seen. Sitting quietly respecting our words up close was empowering, therapeutic and mindful. I started writing poetry and even won a state award which came with \$50 cash. :) I still have the poem and the pride I felt walking up on a church stage to accept the award.

Today, now that I am a parent, I do at home what the schools do not — teach the power of pen and pencil. Kids need to write thank you notes to grandparents, sign checks (someday), and take their signature on a document as a serious imprint that is uniquely theirs.

Typing on a computer is not the same. Information typewritten has been proven to be harder to retain. Typewritten documents are too easily edited and deleted. This can undo happy accidents or turns of phrases that are authentic expressions of oneself. Importantly, 'writing' in a Google doc makes private writings vulnerable to loss, mis-sharing and hacking.

While I write to you today as a parent, I also serve as the Safe Technology chairperson for the Montgomery County Council of PTAs where we hear too many stories about the perils of online learning. Scores have dropped since Google entered the classroom. Pointing and clicking does not prepare a person for thoughtful work or test-taking. The SAT is still largely a hand-written test. Our International Baccalaureate programs are largely paper/pen/book-based. For sound academic reasons.

It's time to bring back what works: handwriting. Typing is a great tool (for communications like this one), but nothing supplants the idea-generation and creative sparks that happen when pen hits paper.

Thank you,

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