

**February 26, 2020**

Hon. Chair Ann Kaiser  
6 Bladen Street, House Room 131  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: HB 1157 - Education - Student Grades - Purposeful  
Misrepresentation**

Madam Chair,

House Bill 1157 puts in place a one year criminal misdemeanor penalty for the purposeful misrepresentation of a student's grade.

In 2013, I had dinner with a friend who is a teacher in Baltimore City. She knew I was running for public office so she spoke frankly about the problems she experienced as a teacher. After our discussion, she pointed out what she lamented most: that the school system was passing students that weren't ready to move on. "I have ninth graders who don't know their letters or numbers." I was a bit puzzled so I asked how exactly this was happening. She said the school system was changing grades to purposefully misrepresent student achievement in order to move students on or graduate them.

I doubted the conversation. For a long time, I didn't think much of it. Unfortunately, today I see reports of this problem in my district and across the region. Through public information act requests, local news has uncovered hundreds of incidents of grade tampering in local school systems. A high level school administrator who reported the issue to the media referred to the problem as "completely out of control." "What happens when these children get to high school? The students do not have the necessary skills to proceed to the next level," said the administrator. "That is a complaint I have heard from high school teachers."

Our schools systems don't exclusively teach reading, writing and arithmetic. We teach and reinforce positive work ethic and ownership. Or we could alternatively

teach and reinforce that there are no consequences for poor performance. We could teach and reinforce that the system will lie and distort reality to deliver your goals without hard work. That is a lesson that will lead to a rude awakening in the real world.

If we are purposefully misrepresenting the grade of a student, we are denying them a meaningful education. I am convinced that this is a real and growing problem. We should make it clear to bad actors that malicious grade fixing will not be allowed, condoned or tolerated.

Thank you for the hearing for House Bill 1157 I am happy to take questions and I ask for a favorable report.

Delegate Robin Grammer