

March 3, 2020

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

Re: Public Schools - Reporting of Assaults, Crimes of Violence, and Felonies (Report Act of 2020)

Madam Chair,

House Bill 846 requires that in the case of a crime of violence, felony or assault, the administration of a public school must file an administrative report, file a police report, provide a copy of both to the victim and report related statistics to the General Assembly.

Every year, hundreds of egregious crimes in our schools are swept under the rug. These serious incidents fall well beyond the reasonable expectations of student life. Examples include chronic physical assaults, sexual assaults and weapons violations. In fear of producing shameful statistics, teachers and staff are pressured to not report incidents and to suppress relevant data.

When I brought this bill last year, I testified about the story of the sexual groping of a female student who was cornered in a school locker room by a male student. The administration was advised about the incident and declined to take any action on behalf of the victim. When I asked the victim how the issue was resolved, she told me “my boyfriend beat him up.” No administrative report. No police report. As far as the public is concerned, it never happened.

Yesterday, a teacher wrote my office: “When I was teaching 10th grade English in a Baltimore County Public School, I had a student who was frequently disruptive in class. One day he was not in class and the daily attendance report said he had been suspended to the Board. I asked the secretary what he did. I was told he tried to rape a girl in the school building. I found out the girl’s arm was broken in the attack. My thinking was I would never see this student again. To my shock

and surprise, the student returned to my class at the beginning of the next quarter. I approached the principal but got no information except he was at the school on special permission, meaning we were not his home school. The survivor of the assault was still in the school. I asked how this scenario was possible. I could not understand how a student who attempted to rape a girl, breaking her arm in the process, was able to return to the same school as the survivor, especially since he was at the school by special permission. My co-worker told me that the girl's family were pressured not to file charges. One reason was to maintain the school's reputation for when the girl applied to colleges. In my 33 years teaching, I witnessed numerous incidents that would have resulted in arrest if taken place outside of school. As the TABCO representative, I was approached by teachers who had been assaulted. In most instances, the teacher was essentially told not to file charges." No administrative report. No police report. As far as the public is concerned, these incidents never happened.

Recently, at Parkville High School in Baltimore County, victims went public after a student was convicted of second degree rape, was recommitted to the school and was subsequently charged for rape – again. A third sexual assault victim was later identified. This is what it takes for the system to respond to egregious incidents.

I present these specific incidents to show a course of conduct in my local school system. A course of conduct that is getting worse.

Not only are students, parents and teachers left without an advocate – many are also left in the dark. This is an unsafe culture for both students and teachers. HB 846 addresses this problem by putting in place standardized reporting procedures any time an egregious crime is committed. I fear what we are teaching victims who cannot count on our school system to stand up for them. At the very least, we should be able to depend on our school systems to stand up for the victims of egregious crimes when they need support the most.

Thank you for the hearing for House Bill 846. I am happy to take questions and I ask for a favorable report.

Delegate Robin Grammer