



## MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair  
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus (MLLC)

DATE: April 1, 2021

RE: HB418 County Boards of Education – Symbols of Hate – Policy

### **The MLLC supports HB418 County Boards of Education – Symbols of Hate - Policy.**

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB418.

Maryland prides itself on its diversity and inclusivity. Therefore, when students become victims of a hate symbol, they experience hurt that can severely impact them. These displays of hate also influence a school's environment and safety. Hate symbol incidents have occurred one too many times in our Maryland [schools](#), and School Boards must to develop adequate strategies to combat any hate.

Disagreement over how to respond to hateful symbols often stems from ignorance about how much children are really affected by hate incidents. Encounters with hostile graffiti in the school environment can significantly hinder students' mental health and academic progress. According to the [Child Study Center at New York University Langone Medical Center](#), if a student identifies as part of a targeted group, including racial, ethnic, religious, or LGBT-identified, these hate-experiences can trigger anxiety and depression. These effects can even be seen in children with no prior mental health issues. Schools should be equipped to react in a way that ensures the safety of all their students.

HB418 requires county school boards to adopt a policy prohibiting the use or display of a symbol of hate on school grounds or in any program, service, school building, or activity that is funded in whole or in part by state funds. This includes displays on clothing, book bags, folders, and similar items. Each county board will be responsible for the development and distribution of educational material on the new policies, including the consequences for violations, to all school employees and students. None of our students should have to experience these traumatizing incidents. It is time to take adequate measures to protect our students from hate.

The MLLC supports this bill and urges a favorable report on HB418.