



SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE

JANUARY 28, 2021

SENATE BILL 98

COUNTY BOARDS AND PUBLIC AND NONPUBLIC PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS AND SCHOOLS DISCRIMINATION – PROHIBITION

OPPOSE

*Maryland's Voice for
Nonpublic Education*

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Maryland CAPE is our state's chapter and one of 40 state chapters of the Council for American Private Education. Our network includes the Catholic, Christian, Evangelical Lutheran, Friends, Independent, Jewish, Lutheran, Montessori, Muslim, and Seventh Day Adventist school communities. We speak on behalf of roughly 120,000 nonpublic school students attending over one thousand nonpublic schools across our great state of Maryland.

In representing the interests of the nonpublic schools, Maryland CAPE has endless appreciation for the state programs that have benefited our schools and the families who have chosen these schools for their children's education. The state funded programs that are accessed by the nonpublic school community range from the purchase of school textbooks and curriculum to the purchase and installation of vital security components that ensures the safety of our students in a very dangerous world. Other funds have gone to update and maintain the aging facilities of nonpublic schools. Over the last few years, thousands of low-income children from across the state – a majority of which are from minority communities – have been given the opportunity to choose a nonpublic school using the BOOST scholarship that they received.

If Senate Bill 98 were to pass, creating a whole new slate of requirements for schools – public and nonpublic – the above programs will be put in peril. Moreover, the entire platform of nonpublic education will become undone. The nonpublic school community is mostly made up of faith-based schools which are guided by policies and provisions that are hundreds and even thousands of years old. They are not items that are put into place by the administration of a specific school. The policies, beliefs, and philosophies that are taught and upheld in these schools have always been protected by the free-exercise clause of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

We ask you to ensure that these protections remain and to please report unfavorably on Senate Bill 98.