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MAJORITY LEADER

Ways and Means Committee
Chair, Revenues Subcommittee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR Testimony on House Bill 71

Chairman Clippinger, Distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I believe every child in Maryland has a basic right to receive a quality education. That is true for every child, but as a practical matter providing a good education is even more important for children who have ended up on a bad path. Education can guide these children in the right direction. Education can prevent recidivism. Education can be the difference between opportunity and incarceration.

Education programs within the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) detention facilities are currently operated by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). There is broad consensus that students in these programs have long been underserved. The current structure and management of the program has led to a variety of shortcomings including uncompetitive teacher pay, course accreditation issues, not providing services mandated for students with special needs, extended vacancies in instructional positions, and a lack of adequate materials. These deficiencies have had an unacceptable impact on both the students and employees of this system. Experts around the State believe that, in order to fix these issues, the juvenile services education system must have autonomy.

Broadly, this legislation creates an independent juvenile services education system governed by a new Board of Education and led by a superintendent. While the employees of this system will be classified as DJS employees, and the procurement and other logistical mechanisms of the system will be managed by DJS, educational decisions will be made by the board and superintendent. In addition to creating a new governing structure for this system, this bill sets forth standards to address the transfer of important records, the accreditation of courses, access to career/technical education and higher education programs, and more.

The bottom line is that we are failing our kids in these programs by denying them access to the quality services that they need. This bill is the product of a multi-year effort with a coalition of advocates, experts, and stakeholders seeking to solve this problem. I thank you for your consideration and ask that the committee provide a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Eric Luedtke".

Delegate Eric Luedtke