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Ways and Means Committee

Education Subcommittee

Finance Resources Subcommittee



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

February 5, 2021,

**Support HB418 – County Boards of Education – Symbols of Hate – Policy**

Dear Madame Chair and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I commend the Speaker and Leadership of the House for our commitment to a racial and economic justice agenda for the state of Maryland this year. In the spirit of that commitment I present and ask for your favorable support of HB 418 designed to take strong and decisive action to ban hate symbols from Maryland Public Schools unless the symbol is necessary for educational programming.

The educational experiences of our diverse student body should not be marred by racist hate symbols from the past such as Confederate flags, nooses and swastikas. Allowing students or others to wear or display these symbols on school property or at school sponsored events is offensive and disruptive to the learning environment.

While I respect the First Amendment and the right to free speech, there is simply no place for the Confederate flag and other hate symbols in public schools. Recently, the U.S. Marine Corps issued a ban on any display of the Confederate flag in their installations stating that the Confederate flag, “presents a threat to our core values, unit cohesion, security, good order and discipline”. School Districts in other states such as Virginia, and even the NASCAR Organization have also condemned and banned the Confederate flag in light of current national events and protests. In Maryland, eight jurisdictions including Carroll, Caroline, Howard, Montgomery (adopted this week) St. Mary’s, Talbot, Wicomico and Baltimore County (adopted in January for the 2021 school year) specifically ban one or more of these symbols in their dress code currently.

One of the first steps in true educational equity is to make sure that everyone feels safe in the school environment. I strongly urge you to explicitly ban wearing or displaying divisive and triggering symbols of hate that disrupt and interfere with the teacher's ability to teach and the student's ability to learn by supporting HB 418.

Sincerely,  
Delegate Michele Guyton