



February 5, 2021

House Bill 418

County Boards of Education - Symbols of Hate - Policy

Committee: Ways and Means

Position: FAVORABLE

The Anne Arundel County Administration **SUPPORTS** House Bill 418 - County Boards of Education - Symbols of Hate - Policy.

Unfortunately, we have seen a rise in the number of hate bias incidents involving the hate symbols identified in this Bill to threaten and intimidate individuals and groups of people in Anne Arundel County, including our students. The symbols identified in this legislation - nooses, swastikas, and the confederate flag - are used to intimidate and threaten specifically targeted minority groups. We must make clear to our students that incidents of hate will not be tolerated. In order to do that, Maryland Law must allow county boards of education to adopt a policy to prohibit the use or display of symbols of hate under certain circumstances.

In February 2020, Anne Arundel County held its first Forum on Bias and Hate Crimes with community members. Before the forum, County Executive Steuart Pittman met with a group of students to get their perspective on hate in our schools, where they shared their experiences with racism and harassment by their peers. Allowing county school boards the option to prohibit the use or display of symbols of hate in our schools would be a critical step in helping all of our students feel safe and welcome in their classrooms.

Hate of any kind has no place in Maryland, and no place in our schools. That includes the traumatizing impact these symbols have on the communities they target. We support this legislation because we must use every tool to combat bigotry, racism, and antisemitism in Anne Arundel County and across the state.

Accordingly, Anne Arundel County respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 418.