

January 27, 2021

HB 155: County Boards and Public and Nonpublic Prekindergarten Programs and Schools - Discrimination - Prohibition Support with Amendments



Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

Strong Schools Maryland supports House Bill 155, County Boards and Public and Nonpublic Prekindergarten Programs and Schools - Discrimination - Prohibition.

All students deserve equitable access to high-quality education. Any institution receiving public funds must be willing to serve the public. House Bill 155 affirmatively protects the rights of and provides recourse for students and families members who experience discrimination from public and nonpublic education institutions receiving State funds.

The bill also extends the provisions of the 2017 prek-2nd grade suspension/expulsion ban to private providers, who will be critical in the implementation of any viable universal or near-universal prekindergarten access strategy. This is a critical step to strengthen protections for broader groups of students, and in that spirit offer the following amendments to further strengthen the impact of HB 155:

- [page 3, lines 16-18] include linguistic ability, English language proficiency, or English language learner status
- [page 3, lines 19-23] include “suspending” between “enrollment of” and “expelling”; include linguistic ability, English language proficiency, or English language learner status
- [page 4, lines 16-22] include linguistic ability, English language proficiency, or English language learner status
- [page 5, lines 2-4] include linguistic ability, English language proficiency, or English language learner status

In order for the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future, and any future wide-reaching education initiative, to be implemented well and yield equitable outcomes, it is imperative that all students, particularly historically and presently marginalized groups, be protected systemically. For these reasons, Strong Schools Maryland urges a favorable report.

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