



## HB418 COUNTY BOARDS OF EDUCATION - SYMBOLS OF HATE – POLICY

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WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

### SUPPORT

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) supports **HB418 County Boards of Education - Symbols of Hate – Policy**. This bill requires, on or before December 31, 2021, each county board of education to adopt a policy prohibiting the use or display of a symbol of hate, including nooses, swastikas, and confederate flags, under certain circumstances. It requires the policy to prohibit the display of a symbol of hate on clothing, book bags, folders, or similar items. The bill also provides an exception to the policy to allow a symbol of hate to be used as an example in a course of study. Finally, the bill requires a county board of education to develop and distribute educational materials regarding the policy to each public school.

AACPS typically opposes legislatively mandated policies. However, racist behavior and actions are not tolerated in AACPS. As such, we continue to work with our staff, families, students, and the community at large to be part of the solution to acts of hate in the county and in our schools. In an effort to continue the dialogue and work toward creating climates free of hate and bigotry, AACPS has conducted community meetings to discuss our efforts, allow student and community feedback, and break into small groups to discuss the issues with racism. AACPS staff updates the Board of Education monthly on bias incidents in our school system. In addition, the school system's Office of Equity and Accelerated Student Achievement has been extremely busy meeting with community stakeholders and providing professional development to AACPS staff.

AACPS' Global Community Citizenship class, which helps students explore the values and diversity of our local, national, and global communities, became a graduation requirement beginning with ninth-graders in the 2019-2020 school year. Changes in our middle school advisory lessons and the implementation of Second Step, which focuses on social/emotional coping skills at the elementary level, are among the other actions that we are taking to help our students.

In 2020, AACPS strongly supported hate crimes legislation which became law. The new law prohibits a person from placing or inscribing an item or a symbol, including an actual or depicted noose or swastika, on any real or personal property, public or private, without the express permission of the owner or specific persons, with the intent to threaten or intimate any person or group of persons. The Anti-Defamation League has designated the confederate flag as a symbol of hate. In his Cornerstone Speech, Alexander H. Stephens, Vice President of the Confederate States, stated that the Confederacy was the first country in the world founded on the principle of racial supremacy, *“Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite ideas; its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery, subordination to the superior race, is his natural and normal condition.”*

We believe that HB418 is an important step in the right direction to help eradicate hate and symbols of hate in Maryland schools. There is a lot of work, however, for everyone to do when it comes to eradicating bigotry and hate. We all have roles to play, and just as is the case when it comes to the education of our children, in this effort all must mean all.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report on HB418.