



"Being here for Maryland's Children, Youth, and Families"

**Ways and Means Committee
House Bill 155 – Inclusive School Acts
January 27, 2021
Support**

The Maryland Association of Youth Service Bureaus (MAYSB) represents a network of bureaus throughout the State who provide mental health services and other supports for young people and their families. Youth Service Bureaus (YSBs) work with students experiencing school difficulties including discrimination and know the impact such discrimination can have on their mental health. MAYSB supports *House Bill 155 – County Boards and Public and Nonpublic Prekindergarten Programs and Schools - Discrimination – Prohibition*.

This bill is important legislation that will ensure anti-discrimination protections for all students, Pre-K-12th grade who are enrolled in Maryland public schools and in schools receiving public funding. Specifically, this bill prohibits discrimination based on one's race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. Students who experience discrimination can experience depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues. Such issues can negatively impact the student's school attendance and performance and thus their school success.

Currently, students who experience discrimination do not have a clear process by which they can file a complaint or seek a remedy. This bill requires Maryland schools to have specific anti-discrimination policies and procedures. By requiring schools to have clear policies on discrimination, as they do for student codes of conduct, students will know how to file a complaint and resolve the discriminatory action. This legislation also ensures nondiscrimination protections for students experiencing discrimination based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or disability. This legislation is important because it codifies the current MSDE guidance on anti-discrimination and extends these protections through law to all students.

The bill provides exceptions for historically, single gender institutions and exceptions for religious education.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony. We urge a favorable vote.

Respectfully Submitted:

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