

# MARYLAND STUDENT COALITION

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## TESTIMONY

**BILL:** House Bill (HB) 56 - Primary and Secondary Education - Virtual Schools - Revisions

**SPONSORS:** Senators Pinsky, Patterson, Lam, Washington, and Kagan

**POSITION:** FAVORABLE

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Tuesday, February 15, 2022

### **SB362: Favorable**

*The Maryland Student Coalition is an entirely student-led, advocacy group that serves to bring students together to promote education policy reform. Founded in 2020 as a vehicle for advocating for students' right to demonstrate, our scope has since expanded to include more educational advocacy initiatives. You can learn more at [marylandstudents.org](http://marylandstudents.org)*

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and honorable members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee: The Maryland Student Coalition is writing in favor of Senate Bill 362.

This bill provides comprehensive development of standards for virtual schools administered by local school systems. By ensuring that virtual schools are representative of students from a diversity of former schools and identity groups, this bill will ensure that even in a virtual format, schools will preserve the important role as a nexus for individuals of different backgrounds to come together. We also support the important role of schools providing essential services to their students, services that many rely on even when attending virtual school. Finally, when teachers are able to teach comfortably, students are able to learn comfortably, and the teacher accommodations provided for in this bill will ensure that that effect continues. It is paramount in particular that teachers receive training on the pedagogical differences of a virtual environment.

Virtual learning is a model that does not always work for every student, but works exceedingly well for certain students. Even as we witness a transition away from virtual learning as the primary education model for local school systems, we must not abandon it as a strong alternative to in-person education programs. By reinforcing the standards that determine the operations of virtual education, the Maryland Student Coalition hopes that it will remain a viable option for years to come.

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Us students deserve a virtual education model that works well for everybody who needs it. For that reason, the Maryland Student Coalition supports the principles within the legislation and strongly encourages issuing a **favorable** report on SB 362.