

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

Testimony to the Ways & Means Committee

In support of

House Bill 850: Schools, Prekindergarten Programs, and County Boards of Education –Discrimination

March 3, 2022

Strong Schools Maryland urges a favorable vote on House Bill 850: Schools, Prekindergarten Programs, and County Boards of Education –Discrimination.

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future envisions a world-class system of public schools for our state’s students. This vision harkens to an ideal of equitable access to opportunities for all students, a critical precursor to actually realizing world-class schools. The Blueprint’s investment in early childhood education is grounded in a “mixed-delivery” (public and private) strategy to expand prekindergarten offerings equitably to all four year olds and qualifying three year olds in the state. House Bill 850 will bolster the positive academic outcomes from the Blueprint’s investment by requiring program providers to refrain from mistreating and discriminating against those they serve.

Public dollars should be put to use for the public good. House Bill 850 does many things, though its most vital provision is that it would prohibit nonpublic education institutions that receive public funds from discriminating against students and families on the basis of their race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. The very institution of public education is wavering in real time; if public dollars are to be diverted to nonpublic use, the very least the state should do is condition the funds with the fair treatment of Marylanders.

When young children experience discrimination in their earliest interactions with formalized education settings, they internalize messages about themselves, how welcome they are, and their capacity to learn. Strong Schools Maryland urges a favorable report on House Bill 850 because we believe this bill would expand the capacity of Maryland to offer a truly world-class education to *all* students.

If you have questions or requests for additional information, you can email:

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