



## HB805 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION - VIRTUAL SCHOOLS - ALTERATIONS

March 3, 2022

WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

### OPPOSE

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) opposes **HB805 Primary and Secondary Education - Virtual Schools - Alterations**. This bill authorizes MSDE, a county board of education, or a public institution of higher education to establish a statewide virtual school in the State. It repeals certain provisions of law regarding the establishment and operation of virtual schools and requires the State to distribute certain funds to virtual schools.

AACPS appreciates the bill's intent to expand virtual learning opportunities for Maryland students. However, we oppose doing so by imposing a statewide mandate that each local board establish a virtual school. This bill would require each school system to establish a virtual school platform for students in every grade and to do so in the 2022-2023 school year.

Local school systems are already fully authorized to provide appropriate virtual learning opportunities under existing law. In fact, AACPS initiated the Virtual Academy, the only virtual school in the State this school year. Our Virtual Academy has been showcased by MSDE due to its rigorous and purposeful structures, schedules, and organization. MSDE has also highlighted our hiring practices and professional learning. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in statewide school facility closures which compelled the immediate transition to distance learning through access to online platforms and other instructional materials from mid-March of 2020 through the current school year. This is also happening without a need for a statewide mandate as such a mandate would result in an unfunded mandate and infringe upon local governance. While virtual options and online learning offerings are planned and will maximize engagement, this does not require a virtual school.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on HB805.