



**Board of Education of Howard County  
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate,  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
February 28, 2024**



**Board of Education  
of Howard County**

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**SB0512: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

**Education - Prohibited Behavior on School Grounds and Property – Application**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **SB0512 Education - Prohibited Behavior on School Grounds and Property – Application** with amendments to remove exceptions for students other than those attending the school where the incident occurred.

As introduced initially in 2021, prior versions of SB0512 struck the section of the Education Article that places criminal penalties on those who “willfully disturb or otherwise willfully prevent the orderly conduct of the activities, administration, or classes of any institution of elementary, secondary, or higher education.” This provision currently applies universally to students as well as parents, staff, and visitors. While there are other provisions of the Criminal Law Article that may be applicable in such situations if this section were removed, such as a trespassing violation, this particular statute is necessary for its use in a school setting that relies on an orderly environment to properly carry out the delivery of education to students.

Over the past several years of deliberation on this bill, various iterations have attempted to focus in on the intent to remove current students from the application of the law in order to decriminalize what can otherwise be handled via student discipline – essentially aimed at reducing the school-to-prison pipeline. To that end, the current version of the bill maintains a prohibition on willful disturbances at schools with exclusions specifically for a student currently attending the institution of elementary, secondary, or higher education where the offense occurs or a student currently attending another school who is participating in or attending a sporting event or other extracurricular program sponsored by the institution where the offense occurs.

While the Board supports the intent of SB0512, it should stop short at including only the first exclusionary provision that would achieve the stated purpose of the sponsor, while leaving this important safety and security law in place for use when other individuals disrupt the school environment. Specifically, if a student has been excluded from their school for disciplinary purposes or does not attend the school all-together this statute is the only additional measure school systems have to deter the student from entering the school grounds. Moreover, the feasibility of applying the second provision is questionable as it is often unknown if an individual (who is not a known student of that school) is a student in another jurisdiction or private school. The second exclusion also does not distinguish between grade levels, therefore if a student of a higher education institution commits a disruptive event on elementary, middle, or high school grounds as an adult the bill would waive criminal penalties even if they have no connection to the school where the offense occurred.

With these amendments, we urge a FAVORABLE report of SB0512 from this Committee.