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of Howard County**

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**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House of Delegates,
Ways and Means Committee
January 31, 2024**

HB0206: UNFAVORABLE

Education - Student Behavior - Parent Notice and Required Counseling (Parent Accountability Act)

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) opposes **HB0206 Education - Student Behavior - Parent Notice and Required Counseling (Parent Accountability Act)** due to its limitations on individualized responses that fit disciplinary circumstances, as well as the potential to inequitably impact families.

As a legislative platform, the Board firmly believes in local control to set educational policy. Specifically, local boards need the flexibility to address disciplinary issues at the local level which best suit their settings, the nature of the particular offense, and the particular circumstances of the individual student.

HB0206 requires a school principal to notify parents when their student is involved in two or more violent and disruptive behavior incidents in a school year. The notice must require the parent to seek counseling with the student and advise the parent of consequences under a new section of Courts Article §3-8A-30.1, which makes it unlawful for a parent or guardian to fail to seek and participate in counseling with their child. Conviction can include community services as determined by the courts.

Currently, students receive an IR (Incident Report) or ODR (Office Discipline Report), when behavior issues rise to a level requiring parent notification regardless of the number of offenses in a school year. While the written notice required under the bill could be added to these notifications, the bill effectively limits administrator flexibility to handle each case individually with regard to consequences, which is a key component of the HCPSS Student Code of Conduct. While the action under HB0206 is for the parents, the student must also participate which could be seen as a form of discipline. A one-size-fits-all approach is not suitable for all behavior violations. Moreover, it is unclear what would qualify as “disruptive behaviors” under the bill, and the bill has the potential to set up an inequitable situation for parents who could not afford counseling services or take time off work. Counseling services are also not defined under the bill, including whether they must be provided by the school system or outside professionals.

For these reasons, we urge a UNFAVORABLE report of HB0206 from this Committee.