



**Howard County**  
Public School System  
**Board of Education of Howard County**  
**Meeting Agenda Item**

**DATE:** March 26, 2026

**TITLE:** Legislative Report – 2026 General Assembly

**PRESENTER(S):** Danielle Lueking, Legislative and Legal Affairs Officer

**STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:**

**Mission:** HCPSS creates an innovative and accountable learning community where we expand opportunities and access, remove barriers, and foster an inclusive environment.

**Key Commitment:** Creating innovative learning and working environments.

**Priority Area:** Priority 4: Enhance Systemic Planning & Procedures.

**Goal:** Foster a culture of continuous improvement; Improve operational responsiveness

**OVERVIEW:**

The Maryland General Assembly meets in Annapolis each year for 90 days to act on legislative measures including the state’s annual budget. The 449th session began on January 14, 2026, and will adjourn on April 13, 2026.

Discussion: Bills identified as having a potential impact on the Howard County Public School System – for which advocacy by the Board of Education of Howard County through the development and adoption of position statements, testimony, and other outreach to the Howard County Delegation, Maryland General Assembly, or Howard County Council could affect the final outcome of the legislation – have been summarized in the attached Legislative Report. The Legislative Committee met on February 18, 2026, (starts on page 1) and March 4, 2026, (starts on page 24) and recommends that the Board adopt the positions indicated in the attached.

**RECOMMENDATION/FUTURE DIRECTION:**

The Legislative Committee recommends that the Board of Education approve the recommendations as noted.

**Submitted by:**

Danielle Lueking  
Legislative and Legal Affairs Officer

J. Stephen Cowles  
General Counsel

**Approval/**

**Concurrence:**

Jacquelin McCoy  
Legislative Committee Chair

William J. Barnes  
Superintendent

Karalee Turner-Little, Ph.D.  
Deputy Superintendent

*The following bills can be found in this report from February 18, 2026, Legislative Committee Meeting:*

<b>Public Schools - Student Attendance - Excused Absences for Civic Engagement</b>	Pg 3
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0575</a>	Cross File Number:
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE	
<b>Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education - Establishment</b>	Pg 4
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0627</a>	Cross File Number:
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE	
<b>Education - Student Behavior - Parent and Guardian Notice and Required Counseling (Parent and Guardian Accountability Act)</b>	Pg 5
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0655</a>	Cross File Number:
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE	
<b>Community Eligibility Provision Expansion Program - Establishment</b>	Pg 5
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0704</a>	Cross File Number: <a href="#">SB0586</a>
Position Recommendation: SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS	
<b>Public Schools - School-Based Mental Health Services - Full-Time Therapist</b>	Pg 7
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0740</a>	Cross File Number:
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE	
<b>County Boards of Education - Student Personal Electronic Device Use Policy - Establishment (Phones Away for the School Day Act)</b>	Pg 8
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0755</a>	Cross File Number:
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE	
<b>Public Middle Schools – Instruction on the Consequences of a Conviction for Felony Murder</b>	Pg 8
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0781</a>	Cross File Number:
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE	
<b>Public Schools - Student Fights - School Investigation and Discipline</b>	Pg 9
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0812</a>	Cross File Number:
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE	
<b>County Boards of Education - College Preparatory Programs - Fees</b>	Pg 10
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0836</a>	Cross File Number:
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE	
<b>Education – Student Athletic Activities – Physical Examinations and Cardiovascular Prescreening</b>	Pg 11
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0837</a>	Cross File Number: <a href="#">SB0596</a>
Position Recommendation: SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS	
<b>State Board of Education - Financial Literacy - Graduation Requirement</b>	Pg 12
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0943</a>	Cross File Number: <a href="#">SB0592</a>
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE	
<b>Public Schools and Youth Sports Programs - Concussion Protocol - Alterations</b>	Pg 12
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0961</a>	Cross File Number:

Position Recommendation: OPPOSE	
<b>Local Public Campaign Financing - County Boards of Education</b> Pg 13	
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0962</a>	Cross File Number:
Position Recommendation: <i>For Board Discussion</i>	
<b>Open Meetings Act - Enhanced Requirements for Educational Entities and Retention Requirements</b> Pg 14	
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0973</a>	Cross File Number:
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE	
<b>Primary and Secondary Education - Funding Accuracy and Full-Time Equivalent Enrollment Count - Alterations and Report (Education Funding Accuracy Act)</b> Pg 15	
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0976</a>	Cross File Number: <a href="#">SB0712</a>
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE	
<b>Talbot County - Public Schools - School Schedule Options</b> Pg 15	
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB1006</a>	Cross File Number: <a href="#">SB0612</a>
Position Recommendation: SUPPORT	
<b>Montgomery County - County Board of Education - School Operation Requirements MC 14-26</b> Pg 16	
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB1084</a>	Cross File Number:
Position Recommendation: SUPPORT	
<b>Montgomery County - Board of Education - Mandatory School Holidays MC 9-26</b> Pg 17	
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB1090</a>	Cross File Number:
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE	
<b>Local School Systems - Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct - Response Policy and After-Action Review</b> Pg 18	
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB1168</a>	Cross File Number: <a href="#">SB0685</a>
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE	
<b>Charles County - Student Bus Transportation Providers - Provider Displacement</b> Pg 20	
Bill Number: <a href="#">SB0574</a>	Cross File Number:
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE	
<b>Language Acquisition Tracking Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children - Establishment</b> Pg 21	
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0879</a>	Cross File Number: <a href="#">SB0502</a>
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE	
<b>State Board of Sign Language Interpreters - Membership and Licensing</b> Pg 23	
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB1192</a>	Cross File Number: <a href="#">SB0645</a>
Position Recommendation: SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS	

## Proposed Statewide Bills for Board Position

Public Schools - Student Attendance - Excused Absences for Civic Engagement	
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0575</a>	Cross File Number:
Primary Sponsor: Delegate Wilkins	Primary Sponsor:
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
Position Recommendation: <b>OPPOSE</b>	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring the State Department of Education and each county board of education to adopt an attendance policy to excuse certain absences for civic engagement by public school students, subject to certain policies and procedures.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB0575 requires local boards of education to adopt an attendance policy that treats a student's absence as excused if they are participating in civic activities during a regular session of the Maryland General Assembly. The policy must excuse students who testify (either virtually or in person) at a General Assembly committee hearing or conduct civic engagement activities, such as meeting with legislators and advocating for or against legislation or policy issues. Furthermore, the policies and procedures adopted by the local board must allow a student to be excused for at least 15 hours or two school days to perform these activities. If a local attendance policy requires a note to excuse an absence, it must authorize an appropriate representative to provide the necessary documentation or note for the student.

The current [HCPSS Policy 9010 Attendance](#) includes a broad definition for civic engagement, which is listed as an example of a discretionary absence. The [Implementation Procedures](#) stipulate that students need to submit the request for such an absence at least a week in advance to have it be considered for a lawful absence. If HB0575 passed, HCPSS' policy would likely cover the instances envisioned by the bill within the current allotment for up to three days of discretionary leave, but may need language updates to explicitly grant a minimum of 15 hours or two school days for General Assembly testimony. Process changes beyond the policy may include how students can submit proof of engagement from third parties (legislative offices or advocacy groups) rather than just a signature from a parent. Since the bill allows the "Department and the applicable county board" to deem other activities as civic engagement, it aligns with the broader use of civic engagement built into the current HCPSS policy which was intended to be as inclusive as possible for activities such as voting, volunteerism, advocacy, testimony, and peaceful demonstrations.

As a legislative priority, the Board supports local decision making in the development of policy that accounts for a balance of educational practices, available resources, public input, and local accountability. While HB0575 aligns with the intent of HCPSS Policy 9010, it remains a mandate on local board's authority to set policies that are directly responsive to its citizenry.

A final portion of HB0575 requires civic engagement absences to be considered lawful and must not be included in any calculation of chronic absenteeism for either the individual student or the school. Currently, both lawful and unlawful absences are included in chronic absenteeism reporting to the State. While the current policy would allow these absences to be considered lawful, our chronic absenteeism reporting practices are not in alignment with that change. If HB0575 were to pass, the Maryland State Department of Education would have to modify collection procedures or local school systems would have to ensure these specific excused absences are flagged so they don't trigger "chronic absenteeism" alerts or reports to the State.

### Additional Information:

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

<b>Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education - Establishment</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB0627</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Acevero	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Establishing the Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education to make recommendations to the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education to further the discovery, interpretation, and learning of the history, culture, and civics of the United States and Maryland and provide equitable learning outcomes consistent with certain provisions of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** The Commission developed under HB0627 would be charged with examining the history, culture, and civics of the U.S. and Maryland, to include the contributions of specified minority groups, the intersection of significant social and cultural features within the minority communities, and the contribution and persecution of religious minorities. The Commission must also annually make recommendations to the Maryland State Board of Education (MSBE) regarding the adoption of standards and programs that accurately reflect the discovery, interpretation and learning of the history, culture, and civics of the U.S. and Maryland.

As a legislative platform the Board supports local decision making in the development of curriculum that accounts for a balance of educational practices, available resources, public input, and accountability that is informed and guided by State Board established standards and models, rather than prescriptive legislative mandates.

While at the discretion of MSBE, it is important to note that changes in standards, as well as any resulting basic curriculum and extracurricular programs that may result from the recommendations of the Commission under HB0627, can have large fiscal impacts on local school systems due to the significant amount of work that needs to be done in order to implement them with fidelity. When broadening the scope of standards and programmatic requirements, there is also the potential to overburden curriculum. Teachers have a finite time in a given unit/year to fit in each new mandated objective.

Moreover, Maryland's standards and frameworks for American History and civics [have previously received recognition](#) for the emphasis on cultural responsiveness and civic engagement in its curricula. The revised frameworks in grades PreK – 12 broaden the historical narrative by including marginalized groups and encourage students to learn more about all members of their communities through the inquiry process.

Staff particularly has a concern with legislative mandates such as HB0627 when it comes to the potential politicization of the social studies curriculum. Given the appointment of the Commission called for in the bill, curriculum focus may shift inappropriately alongside changes in the gubernatorial administration. For the latest review of social studies standards, the Maryland State Department of Education used a stakeholder committee similar in concept and scope to the Commission outlined in HB0627. Resulting recommendations were motivated by advocacy, rather than reliance on overarching pedagogical practices and educational experts in the field. Once highlighted by local school staff, revisions were ultimately made to balance the curricular expectations, but the process caused unnecessary tensions. While the intent behind the bill is laudable, it presents significant risks to the stability and integrity of social studies programs.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – The Board opposed HB0489 during the 2022 session, and took no position in subsequent years. None of the bills have moved after initial hearings in the House.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – Delegate Terrasa.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

Education - Student Behavior - Parent and Guardian Notice and Required Counseling (Parent and Guardian Accountability Act)	
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0655</a>	Cross File Number:
Primary Sponsor: Delegates R. Long	Primary Sponsor:
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Establishing that it is unlawful for a parent or guardian of a student in a public school to fail to seek and participate in counseling with the parent's or guardian's child after receiving a certain notice of violent and disruptive behavior; and requiring a public school principal to provide a certain written notice to the parent or guardian of a student who engages in two or more incidents of violent and disruptive behavior on school premises or during school-related activities during the school year.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB0655 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 the 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.

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.

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 HB0655 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 consequence under HB0655 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 HB0655, 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.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – The Board opposed HB1313 during the 2025 session. The bill had an initial hearing in the House, with no further movement.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

Community Eligibility Provision Expansion Program - Establishment	
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0704</a>	Cross File Number: <a href="#">SB0586</a>
Primary Sponsor: Delegate Palakovich Carr	Primary Sponsor: Senator Guzzone
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>
Position Recommendation: SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Establishing the Community Eligibility Provision Expansion Program in the State Department of Education to provide funding to eligible schools that participate in the federal community

eligibility provision of the child nutrition programs; requiring schools that opt out of the Community Eligibility Provision of the Child Nutrition Program to include certain information in a certain report; and requiring the Governor in fiscal year 2028 and succeeding years to include \$10,000,000 in the annual budget bill for the Program.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB0704/SB0586 establishes a Community Eligibility Provision Expansion Program to be administered by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The bill requires the State to pay the difference between the applicable federal paid reimbursement rate and the free reimbursement rate as set annually by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. Funding would be for eligible schools that participate in the Federal Community Eligibility Provision of the Child Nutrition Programs (CEP). This funding must complement and not replace federal funds. MSDE would develop a process for county boards to participate in the state-level program and ensure funding is distributed based on the concentration of poverty in public schools within the jurisdiction as well as geographic diversity in determining funding prioritization. By July 1, 2027, and annually, MSDE must report on the status of the program to the Maryland General Assembly.

CEP is a meal service option that allows schools and school districts in low-income areas to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to enrolled students, without collecting household income applications. School districts with an Identified Student Percentage (ISP) of 40 percent or higher are eligible to elect CEP, while eligible individual schools are those over an ISP of 25 percent. Identified students are those students who are directly certified for free meals based on their participation in other programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

In HCPSS, 11 schools currently participate in the Federal CEP. Under HB0704/SB0586 those schools would be eligible to receive additional funds from the State to cover costs of meals not already covered by the Federal government.

As an additional parameter since the prior introduction of this bill, local school systems are required to provide specific data to MSDE under the annual report due to the General Assembly, beginning July 1, 2027. These include:

- Program Outcomes: A description of the outcomes resulting from the Community Eligibility Provision Expansion Program.
- School Meal Debt: The total amount of school meal debt incurred by students, which must be disaggregated by individual school.
- Debt Resolution: An explanation of how the local school system resolved the student meal debt.

If a school within a local school system is eligible for the Federal CEP (having an ISP of 25% or greater) but elects not to participate, the local school system must provide additional detailed information:

- Reasons for Non-Participation: The specific reasons why the school chose not to participate in the Federal program.
- Financial Estimates: An estimate of the net cost or savings the school would have seen if it had elected to participate.
- Operational Costs: The projected cost of operating the Federal CEP within that specific school.
- Federal Reimbursements: The anticipated amount of Federal reimbursements the school would have received through participation.

MSDE would be required to publish this information on its website in a searchable and downloadable format, organized by both local school system and individual school.

HB0704/SB0586 limits the statewide appropriation for the program to \$10 million. This amount is insufficient to fully fund all CEP-eligible schools in Maryland that meet the minimum 25% ISP threshold. In Howard County alone, 33 schools have an ISP greater than 25 percent, while only 11 schools participate in the program. While the funds are supported to expand meal programs in Maryland, the additional reporting requirement would be a burden to local school systems and their food service programs. Reporting would ultimately show that it is not financially

feasible for all schools with ISPs greater than 25 percent to participate. Staff would recommend an amendment to remove this section, aligning the bill with the prior versions.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – The Board supported a similar bill, HB1254/SB0769, during the 2025 session. Neither bill moved following an initial hearing.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – Delegates Feldmark, Guzzone, Hill, Terrasa, Wu, and Ziegler; Senator Guzzone.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS

Public Schools - School-Based Mental Health Services - Full-Time Therapist	
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0740</a>	Cross File Number:
Primary Sponsor: Delegate Stinnett	Primary Sponsor:
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring each public school to employ a full-time therapist that provides school-based mental health services to students during the instructional day; and requiring the full-time therapist to be licensed and certified by the State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** Under Education Article § 7-401 which establishes local school system responsibilities for adequate health services, HB0740 requires each public school to employ a full-time therapist that provides school-based mental health services to students during the instructional day. The therapist employed shall be licensed and certified by the State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists.

Currently, HCPSS has 20 school-system employed social workers in School-Based Mental Health Services. Each are licensed at the highest level (LCSW-C) by the Department of Health’s State Board of Social Work Examiners, and authorized by their license to treat and diagnose mental health disorders. Across HCPSS’ 75 total schools, each social worker serves three to four schools.

The intent of HB0740 is supported to bring down the ratio of social workers to schools. The average salary of an HCPSS social worker is approximately \$120,000 per year, making the fiscal impact over \$6 million to add 55 additional social workers. Given social workers can bill Medicaid for services provided to students, the income generated by this program could defer part of the cost of hiring more social workers. If funding could be made available, bringing the ratio closer to two schools per social worker would require 15 rather than 55 additional social workers. As a legislative platform, however, the Board opposes legislation which limits local board flexibility in oversight of school system operations and budgets, and supports making position decisions locally to account for the needs of each school.

Furthermore, the bill indicates the required therapists would be individuals licensed by the “State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists” (Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors- LCPC). Traditionally, school systems have hired LCSW-Cs for therapeutic positions, but not LCPCs. As currently written, by only including LCPCs, it is unclear whether the intent of HB0740 is to increase mental health supports to students, or to create pathways for LCPCs to be hired by school systems to provide therapy, or both.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – Delegate Terrasa.

- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – *For Committee Discussion*
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

<b>County Boards of Education - Student Personal Electronic Device Use Policy - Establishment (Phones Away for the School Day Act)</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB0755</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Wolek	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring each county board of education to develop and implement, not later than the 2026-2027 school year, a policy prohibiting the use of a personal electronic device by a student during school day hours; providing the policy may not prohibit a student from using a personal electronic device for any purpose related to an individualized program or 504 plan; providing that any disciplinary measures adopted as part of the policy may not include suspension or expulsion solely for violation of the policy; etc.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB0755 includes various provisions found in HB0163/SB0079 and HB0525 (discussed in the Board’s February 26, 2026, Legislative report) such as requiring a policy to prohibit the use of cellular phones by students during instructional time to be implemented by the 2026-2027 school year. HB0755 requires exceptions to the use of phones during instructional time as noted under previous bills and calls for the policy to include disciplinary measures including exclusions for the use of suspension or expulsion solely for a violation of the policy.

As a legislative priority, the Board supports local decision making in the development of policy that accounts for a balance of educational practices, available resources, public input, and local accountability. The Board approved adjustments to Policy 8080 – Responsible Use of Technology, Digital Tools, and Social Media, and the Student Code of Conduct in [January 2025](#) after a months’ long process to determine the best path forward in implementing reductions to the use of personal devices by students during the student day.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

<b>Public Middle Schools – Instruction on the Consequences of a Conviction for Felony Murder</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB0781</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Conaway	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring the State Board of Education to develop curriculum resources and county boards of education to develop and incorporate instruction on the consequences of a conviction for felony murder for public middle school students in the State.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB0781 requires the Maryland State Board of Education (MSBE) to develop age–appropriate curriculum standards for a course on the consequences of a conviction for felony murder for students in grades six through eight. Beginning in school year 2027–2028, each local board of education must develop and

implement a course based on the consequences of a conviction for felony murder curriculum standards developed by MSBE, which must be taught to students at least once during grades six through eight. “Collateral consequences of a criminal conviction” is defined under the bill as the legal penalties that take away an individual’s freedom, rights, and access to programs or services after conviction for murder in the first degree.

As a legislative platform the Board supports local decision making in the development of curriculum that accounts for a balance of educational practices, available resources, public input, and accountability that is informed and guided by State Board established standards and models, rather than legislative mandates as encompassed in HB0781. Not only does the course called for under HB0781 impose a mandate on an already packed middle school curricula, but HCPSS curriculum staff indicates the topic is not developmentally appropriate for this age group. [Recent research on youth crime in Maryland](#) analyzed by the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services indicates young people are more likely to be victims of violent crimes than perpetrators of violent crimes.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – The Board opposed HB0933 during the 2025 session. The bill had an initial hearing in the House, with no further movement.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

<b>Public Schools - Student Fights - School Investigation and Discipline</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB0812</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Tomlinson	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring a principal or school administration to investigate each student fight or physical struggle; prohibiting a school employee from disciplining a student under certain circumstances; and requiring a principal or school administration to expunge certain documentation from a student's disciplinary record under certain circumstances.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB0812 requires a principal or school administration to investigate each student fight or physical struggle, and prohibits school employees from disciplining a student who, after the investigation, more likely than not used reasonable force to protect the student or to escape the attack. If a student is disciplined during the course of an investigation but is later determined to have used reasonable force, the principal or school administration must expunge any documentation of the discipline from the student’s disciplinary record.

Initially, HB0812 includes undefined terms that staff indicates would be subjective to identify such as “more likely than not” and “reasonable force.” The bill is silent on what level of review/appeal would later determine the use of force was reasonable. Staff is further concerned with the provisions that require expungement of a student’s disciplinary record. While the intent is understood, new tracking measures would likely need to account for students who may have served a suspension or expulsion but subsequently had the record disposed of. This is especially critical for a student with a disability who is entitled to additional protections if removed from school. When a student is removed from their regular placement for more than 10 consecutive school days a manifestation determination process is triggered to determine if the removal was a direct result of behavior related to their disability. Without proper recording keeping, school systems could be in violation.

Current laws and regulations provide much needed flexibility to local boards to create disciplinary rules at the local level which best suit their settings, the nature of the particular offense, and the particular circumstances of the

individual student. As a legislative platform, the Board opposes legislation that would require certain disciplinary actions and mandated penalties for specific infractions.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – The Board opposed HB1132/SB0783 during the 2025 session. Neither bill moved after an initial hearing.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

County Boards of Education - College Preparatory Programs - Fees	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB0836</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Conaway	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Prohibiting a county board of education from charging a student or a student's parent or guardian any fees related to enrollment in or completion of a competitive entry college preparatory program consisting of Advanced Placement courses specified by the College Board.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB0836 adds a provision indicating local boards of education may not charge a student or parent/guardian any fees related to enrollment in or completion of Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future established pathways free of charge to students and families under Education Article § 7–205.1, including AP courses, limited to those who are College and Career Ready (CCR). The current requirement to cover all post-CCR costs for students is one of the innovative approaches in the Blueprint to propel students forward by removing fiscal barriers. For that reason, it is also costly for local school systems. Currently HCPSS pays exam fees for any student who is eligible for Free and Reduced Priced Meals (FARMs) as well as the CCR students. HCPSS currently does not limit the number of exams CCR and FARMs students can take.

This leaves 9th and 10th graders who are not FARMs to pay for their exams, and 11th and 12th graders who are not CCR and who are not FARMs to pay for their exams. Last year these students paid approx. \$250,000 worth of fees. This year that number is about \$304,000. If HB0836 were to pass, HCPSS would need to absorb these fees, and could expect that number to be even higher because additional students who currently limit their AP exam taking, for financial or other reasons, would likely take advantage of free AP exams. Illustrative of this increase, prior to paying for CCR, students took about 11,500 exams. Last year that number increased to 13,757 exams and this year students have signed up for 16,300 exams.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

Education – Student Athletic Activities – Physical Examinations and Cardiovascular Prescreening	
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0837</a>	Cross File Number: <a href="#">SB0596</a>
Primary Sponsor: Delegate Ebersole	Primary Sponsor: Senator Brooks
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>
Position Recommendation: SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring a certain physical examination used to determine the physical fitness of a student seeking to participate in interscholastic sports to include a certain cardiovascular prescreening; requiring certain health care providers who perform certain physical examinations for students participating in interscholastic sports to include a cardiovascular prescreening as part of the examination; etc.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB0837/SB0596 establishes cardiovascular prescreening rules, which include mandatory heart health assessments for students participating in interscholastic sports starting in the 2026–2027 school year. Many of the bill’s provisions relate to the requirements for health care providers performing the cardiovascular pre-screening. Providers must include the cardiovascular prescreening as a standard part of the physical fitness examination for students seeking to participate in interscholastic sports. The screening cannot be conducted more than 90 days before the first day of the school year in which the student intends to play.

The proposed rules under HB0837/SB0596 apply to all public schools and nonpublic schools that hold a certificate of approval and require physical exams for sports participation. An additional data reporting requirement, starting in the 2026-2027 school year, indicates public schools must track and report the number of students who received physicals, how many included the cardiovascular prescreening, and how many were referred to a cardiologist.

To support these new requirements, the Maryland State Department of Education and the Maryland Department of Health will develop guidelines, training, and continuing education for providers on how to conduct screenings and identify early signs of cardiac arrest. By January 31 each year, the Maryland Department of Health will publish a report on its website analyzing the outcomes of the screenings, including the proportion of positive findings and clinician utilization.

Under existing Education Article § 7–436, schools must provide information on the nature and warning signs of sudden cardiac arrest – such as fainting, chest pains, and abnormal heart rate – to students, parents, and coaches. Students and parents are required to sign a statement acknowledging they have received this information before the student can participate in athletic activities. Staff supports the intent of HB0837/SB0596 to further identify potential cardiac concerns prior to student participation in high school athletics.

Two proposed amendments would decrease the burden of HB0837/SB0596 on local school systems. First, while athletics personnel can easily report the number of students receiving physicals based on the number of athletes approved for tryouts each season, reporting how many students received cardiovascular prescreening and how many were referred to a cardiologist would be incredibly difficult to track and report. Staff recommend removal of this provision. Additionally, an amendment to align with existing annual sports physicals would be to shift the 90-day timeframe to “within 12 months of the first day of tryouts for that sport.” The availability of providers to conduct cardiovascular prescreening, including through local health departments, may be limited if all athletes are attempting to obtain one within this 90-day window before the start of a school year. With HB0837/SB0596 expected to be implemented for the 2026-2027 school year, and the bill’s effective date of July 1, 2026, families will also be hard-pressed to obtain these screenings for the start of the 2026 fall sports season.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – Delegate Feldmark.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – SUPPORT with **AMENDMENTS**
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – SUPPORT with **AMENDMENTS**

State Board of Education - Financial Literacy - Graduation Requirement	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB0943</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b> <a href="#">SB0592</a>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Forbes	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Senator Brooks
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring the State Board of Education to establish a certain graduation requirement in financial literacy; requiring students, beginning with the 2030 graduating class, to successfully complete a certain personal financial literacy course; and requiring county boards, upon successful completion of the course, to award certain credit to students and to allow students to fulfill certain remaining credit requirements through certain existing courses.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** Beginning with the graduating class of 2030, HB0943/SB0592 mandates that every student must successfully complete a personal financial literacy course to graduate. The requirement must be a standalone course at least one semester in length and it cannot be embedded within other subjects. The course must be taught during the 11th or 12th grade. The bill also specifies that students will earn at least one-half credit toward their diploma upon completion. They may fulfill any remaining half-credit requirements through existing courses in departments such as mathematics, social studies, business, or career and technical education.

Mandates for the completion of financial literacy courses are repeatedly introduced in legislation. Currently, HCPSS students in 7th and 8th grade receive instruction related to Financial Literacy and Careers across a continuum of courses (Financial and Career Foundations I and II) as Career and Technical Education courses. Financial Literacy is also offered as a course at the high school level.

While the State establishes the standards, and individual county boards are given the authority under HB0943/SB0592 to determine the specific curriculum, instructional materials, and which department will house the course, the bill is still a curricular mandate. As a legislative platform, the Board supports local decision-making in the development of curriculum and policy that account for a balance of educational practices, available resources, public input, and accountability that is informed and guided by State Board established standards and models, rather than legislative mandates. Legislation that limits local board decision-making authority may weaken the Board's bond with the local community and adversely impact the community's participation in the governance and operation of the school system.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – The Board opposed a similar bill, HB0326, during the 2025 session. The bill had an initial hearing in the House, with no further movement.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

Public Schools and Youth Sports Programs - Concussion Protocol - Alterations	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB0961</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Miller	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring the State Department of Education to include athletic officials in certain policies and in a certain program to provide awareness on a certain concussion protocol for certain public school and youth sports programs; establishing that certain individuals may remove a student from play and prevent

a student from returning to play under certain circumstances; and authorizing a person to bring a certain action for declaratory relief to enforce certain provisions of law.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** Initially HB0961 adds “athletic officials” defined as individuals who officiate a sports contest for compensation or as a volunteer to existing Education Article § 7–433 for the purposes of requiring those involved in sports to receive training and be aware of concussion protocols. The remaining provisions appear to be providing protection of individuals’ authority to manage suspected concussions. The bill grants specific individuals – including athletic officials, coaches, school personnel, and parents or guardians – the authority to immediately remove a student from play or prevent their return to play if a concussion is suspected. To ensure this authority is not undermined, the bill prohibits any person from establishing regulations, rules, policies, or practices (including formal or informal training and guidance) that would restrict, diminish, or deter these individuals from exercising their authority. Lastly, by allowing for declaratory relief, HB0961 provides a legal pathway to challenge any policies or actions that attempt to interfere with these safety protocols.

While the inclusion of athletic officials in the concussion protocols expands the knowledge and awareness of adults working directly with student athletes, staff is unsure of the need for HB0961. In particular, the ability for athletic officials to remove a student from play or prevent their return seems problematic. Parents, coaches, and athletic trainers already have this ability and are the people who should be making this call. By creating a specific list of individuals in statute as to who can make a determination, and no ability to create related rules, policies, and practices, staff foresees potential conflict over whose authority should be followed if those listed disagree. Moreover, unlike parents, coaches, and athletic trainers, athletic officials are outside entities that are not responsive to the school system and consistently change from game to game. Implementation of HB0961 would create unclear and complicated processes, such as who is receiving confirmation of clearance for return to play if an athletic official was the one to remove a student.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

<b>Local Public Campaign Financing - County Boards of Education</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB0962</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Woorman	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> <i>For Board Discussion</i>	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Authorizing the governing body of a county to establish a system of public campaign financing for elected members of the county board of education.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB0962 allows all local governing bodies in Maryland to establish a system of public campaign financing for local board of education elections. This would be in addition to the current statutory authorization under Election Law § 13–505 for local elective offices in the executive or legislative branches of county government.

As procedural legislation related to local board of education candidates, public campaign financing is a measure often used to diversify candidate pools for elected office as well as lessen the influence of large/special interest donors. It is currently used for executive and legislative positions within Howard County government.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – The Board supported a similar bill, HB0550, during the 2025 session. The bill had an initial hearing in the House, with no further movement.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – Delegate Terrasa.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – *For Committee Discussion*
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – *For Board Discussion*

<b>Open Meetings Act - Enhanced Requirements for Educational Entities and Retention Requirements</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB0973</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Miller	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Making certain enhanced Open Meetings Act requirements applicable to the Maryland State Department of Education, Accountability and Implementation Board, and county boards of education; and requiring certain entities subject to enhanced Open Meetings Act requirements to retain certain meeting minutes and recordings for 15 years after the date of the session.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** Similar to HB0154/SB0099 (discussed in the Board’s February 26, 2026, Legislative report), HB0973 integrates county boards of education, along with the Maryland State Department of Education and the Accountability and Implementation Board, into existing open meeting laws through several statutory amendments. The bill explicitly adds local boards to the list of specific public bodies governed by General Provisions Article § 3–307. This section outlines “enhanced requirements” for transparency that go beyond general open meeting standards. By doing so, the legislation subjects school boards to the same rigorous oversight as a list of state-level entities like the State Board of Elections and the Maryland Stadium Authority.

One additional provision of HB0973 calls for the retention of local board minutes and recordings for a minimum of 15 years. The Open Meetings Act under General Provisions Article § 3–306 currently requires retention of minutes and recorded meetings for five years.

As noted in the [HB0154/SB0099 Fiscal and Policy Note](#), each local board of education in Maryland already provides both live and archived video streams of their meetings held in open session. Recordings of regular meetings in Howard County are available on Board Docs going back through 2016. HCPSS currently contracts for annual livestreaming and storage of Board meetings, which break down to roughly \$550 per meeting. Costs would depend on the total number of meetings per year, and are expected to rise in future years. We are also required to provide closed caption for all broadcasts, with current captioning services costing approximately \$80/hour.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – *For Committee Discussion*
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

<b>Primary and Secondary Education - Funding Accuracy and Full-Time Equivalent Enrollment Count - Alterations and Report (Education Funding Accuracy Act)</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB0976</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b> <a href="#">SB0712</a>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Rose	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Senator Corderman
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Altering the definition of "full-time equivalent enrollment" in the calculation for State education aid to include the average number of students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12 on September 30 and May 31 of the prior school year; requiring the State Department of Education to publish online and submit a certain report to certain standing committees of the General Assembly; and applying the Act to the calculation of education funding for fiscal years beginning after June 30, 2027.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB0976/SB0712 attempts to replace the current September 30 official student enrollment count for funding purposes with a calculation that looks back at four points in time during the prior school year. Under the bill, enrollment would be the average of enrollment snapshots taken on the last day of the month in September, December, March, and the final day of school.

The logistics and timing of this bill, however, concern HCPSS staff. It would substantially delay the enrollment verification process used for the school system budget, given it would not be available until the end of the school year, and likely even further delayed following Maryland State Department of Education review and certification of the official number. State and local budgets are currently adopted by May/June. The precise impact of such a change would need to be studied to determine if the average of these dates is, in fact, a better indicator of future funding needs of the school system.

If the intent of HB0976/SB0712 is to address concerns with using a snapshot in time as the basis for school system funding, the proposed solution is merely a different variation of the current problem of funding based on a lagging indicator, especially in fast growing districts. The previous title of this bill indicated it was aimed at truancy reduction, however such counts are unlikely to impact student attendance. At the very least, more research and analysis should be done to determine what measures may more accurately reflect future school system enrollment and the subsequent funding needs before legislating such measures.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – The Board opposed HB1200 during the 2024 session. The bill had an initial hearing in the House, with no further movement.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

<b>Talbot County - Public Schools - School Schedule Options</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1006</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b> <a href="#">SB0612</a>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Talbot County Delegation	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Talbot County Delegation
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> SUPPORT	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Authorizing the Talbot County Board of Education to operate all the schools within the county using a scheduling model that eliminates early dismissal days to allow for less than 180 school days if the minimal hours of attendance are met; and requiring a school operating under a certain scheduling model to provide certain employees an opportunity to make up lost wages.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB1006/SB0612 takes a bill passed for Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) during the 2025 session to allow for flexibility in school system calendars and adds the same authority for Talbot County Public Schools (TCPS). HCPSS also has a similar bill currently being considered by the Howard County Delegation. Specifically, the bill authorizes TCPS to operate one or more schools within the county using a scheduling model that eliminates early dismissal days as long as a minimum of 1,080 hours are met.

While Education Article § 7-103(e)(1) in current statute allows for school systems, including HCPSS, to operate on a year-round model, the 180-day minimum requirement would still apply. Under Md. Code Regs. 13A.09.10.14 hours are set at:

- (4) A school providing an elementary school or secondary school educational program, or both, shall be open for student attendance for a minimum of:
  - (a) 1,080 hours in a school year for elementary schools and nongraded educational programs; and
  - (b) 1,170 hours in a school year for secondary schools.

As a legislative priority when seeking flexibility in the way school systems account for instructional time, the Board supports measures such as the intent of HB1006/SB0612. Allowing a district to count hours instead of days, for instance, would provide a true reflection of overall instructional time, as well as give schools the flexibility to determine how those hours are distributed. Under current law, whether schools open for the minimum three hours, or conduct a full six-hour school day, both count towards one day out of the 180 day requirement. Additionally, half-days are notoriously unproductive for both instructional time and professional development. When counting hours, rather than setting up two half-days of three hours to count towards the 180 day requirement, school systems could provide the same amount of instruction in one full day (six hours) and now have the second full day for productive instruction or professional development.

Maryland is already at the top of the nation-wide range in instructional hours as one of six states that sets a minimum at 1,080 hours regardless of level ([Education Commission of the States, Instructional Time Policies, 2018](#)). This same report notes 22 states either have no minimum day requirements (only hours) or give districts the option to meet either day or hour minimums. Only three other states have a minimum higher than 1,080 hours.

Especially given lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic regarding continuity of learning and lapses in instruction, HB1006/SB0612 is a timely effort to allow schools to be innovative and forward-thinking when it comes to maximizing instructional time to meet the educational needs of students.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – The Board supported a similar bill, HB0226/SB0569, during the 2025 session. The bill passed both houses and became law.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – *For Committee Discussion*
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – SUPPORT

<b>Montgomery County - County Board of Education - School Operation Requirements MC 14-26</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1084</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Montgomery County Delegation	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> SUPPORT	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Authorizing the Montgomery County Board of Education to require public schools within the county to be open for pupil attendance for a minimum number of actual school days or a minimum number of school hours instead of both.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** Similar to HB1006/SB0612 above, and HB226/SB0569 passed for the Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) during the 2025 session, HB1084 would allow for flexibility in the Montgomery County Public School System (MCPS) calendar. This bill differs, however, in that it authorizes MCPS to elect to meet either the number of days or the number of hours required under Education Article § 7–103. It is expected that amendments to this bill will provide this authority only in the case of emergency closures.

As a legislative priority when seeking flexibility in the way school systems account for instructional time, the Board supports measures such as the intent of HB1084. Allowing a district to count hours instead of days, for instance, would provide a true reflection of overall instructional time, as well as give schools the flexibility to determine how those hours are distributed. Under current law, whether schools open for the minimum three hours, or conduct a full six-hour school day, both count towards one day out of the 180 day requirement. Additionally, half-days are notoriously unproductive for both instructional time and professional development. When counting hours, rather than setting up two half-days of three hours to count towards the 180 day requirement, school systems could provide the same amount of instruction in one full day (six hours) and now have the second full day for productive instruction or professional development.

Maryland is already at the top of the nation-wide range in instructional hours as one of six states that sets a minimum at 1,080 hours regardless of level ([Education Commission of the States, Instructional Time Policies, 2018](#)). This same report notes 22 states either have no minimum day requirements (only hours) or give districts the option to meet either day or hour minimums. Only three other states have a minimum higher than 1,080 hours.

Especially given lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic regarding continuity of learning and lapses in instruction, HB1006/SB0612 is a timely effort to allow schools to be innovative and forward-thinking when it comes to maximizing instructional time to meet the educational needs of students.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – The Board supported a similar bill, HB0226/SB0569, during the 2025 session. The bill passed both houses and became law.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – *For Committee Discussion*
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – SUPPORT

<b>Montgomery County - Board of Education - Mandatory School Holidays MC 9-26</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1090</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Montgomery County Delegation	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring the Montgomery County Board of Education to close public schools in the county to students beginning in the 2027-2028 school year in observance of Yom Kippur and Juneteenth and to observe the first day of Diwali, Eid al-Adha, Eid al-Fitr, Lunar New Year, and Rosh Hashanah.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** Similar to Ho.Co. 11-25 (opposed in the January 29, 2026, Board Legislative report) HB1090 mirrors language introduced in 2025 under [HB1169](#) which was initially local to Montgomery County, but had Howard County added prior to passage in the House. HB1090 is currently specific to the Montgomery County Public School System, and requires schools to be closed for students in observance on the first day only for the following holidays:

- Diwali (observed every fall between October and November)
- Eid Al-Adha (observance varies based on the lunar calendar)

- Eid Al-Fitr (observance varies based on the lunar calendar)
- Lunar New Year (observed every winter between late January and mid-February)
- Rosh Hashanah (observed every fall between September and October)
- Yom Kippur (observed every fall between September and October)
- Juneteenth (observed every June on the 19<sup>th</sup> of the month)

The requirement would go into effect starting with the 2027-2028 school year.

As an alternative to legislative mandates for the addition or removal of school holidays, the Board’s 2026 Legislative Priorities asked for legislation that would study school system calendar needs focusing on operational impacts and the authority of local boards of education to create policies around religious holiday observances, as well as potential flexibility in the use of existing holidays identified in statute based on local needs.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – The Board opposed HB1169 during the 2025 session. This bill passed the House, with no movement after an initial hearing in the Senate.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – *For Committee Discussion*
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE
- *Legislative Committee Comments – Two members of the Committee voted to oppose; one voted to support.*

Local School Systems - Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct - Response Policy and After-Action Review	
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB1168</a>	Cross File Number: <a href="#">SB0685</a>
Primary Sponsor: Delegate Bagnall	Primary Sponsor: Senator Gile
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring the State Department of Education to develop a model sexual abuse and sexual misconduct response policy that includes, at minimum, certain components; requiring each local school system to adopt a certain response policy on or before July 1, 2027; and requiring each local school system to provide certain notices and conduct certain after-action reviews under certain circumstances.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB1168/SB0685 initially mandates that the Maryland State Department of Education create a model sexual abuse response policy. Local school systems must adopt these standards, ensuring prompt parental notification, public transparency via webpages, and formal after-action reviews when responding to credible allegations of sexual misconduct or serious incidents. A serious incident is defined as an event that poses a substantial threat to the safety of a student or staff member or to the school environment, necessitating an immediate response from school administration or law enforcement. This includes credible allegations of sexual misconduct or sexual abuse that result in an employee, contractor, or volunteer being removed from student contact for more than 10 days; physical assault and threats of violence; any offense involving a weapon; incidents of child abuse or neglect; any events that require an emergency response; and any other incident that a local school system determines requires a formal after-action review. The bill also defines a credible allegation as a report of sexual misconduct or abuse that is both specific and plausible. This report must be made by a person with apparent knowledge of the situation and contain enough information to justify the school system taking temporary protective action.

When responding to credible allegations of sexual misconduct or serious incidents, local school systems must adhere to the following requirements under HB1168/SB0685:

Notification to Parents and Guardians

- **Prompt Notification:** A parent or guardian must receive prompt notification if their student makes a credible allegation of a serious incident.
- **Timeline for Child Abuse Allegations:** If an allegation involves child abuse by a school employee, notice must be provided to the parent or guardian as soon as possible and no later than three school days.
- **General Notification Timeline:** For other credible allegations, the school must notify parents and guardians “as soon as feasible” after becoming aware of the situation.
- **Content of the Notice:** The notice must confirm the receipt of the allegation, indicate whether the employee was removed from student contact, describe the safety precautions being taken, and list referrals for counseling or support.
- **Privacy Restriction:** The school may not disclose the name of the employee under investigation in the notice sent to parents and guardians.

#### Public Communication and Webpage Requirements

- **Establish a Time-Stamped Webpage:** Each school system must create a dedicated webpage for serious incidents that confirms the nature of the incident and provides nonidentifying information about the status of the ongoing investigation.
- **Provide Updates:** The webpage must be updated whenever there is a material change, such as the conclusion of the investigation or the start of a criminal case.
- **Include Resources:** The page should provide links to counseling and support resources for parents and guardians.
- **Adhere to a Communications Plan:** The State’s model policy will include a plan detailing exactly what information is authorized to be shared with the public at each stage of the response process.

#### Other Notable Provisions

- **Law Enforcement Requests:** A law enforcement agency or child protective services unit may request that certain details be withheld from the public or that communication be delayed.
- **After-Action Review:** Within 45 days of the conclusion of a case, the school system must conduct an after-action review that specifically evaluates its compliance with transparency requirements. A redacted report of these findings may be provided to the Maryland State Board of Education and State Superintendent.
- **Electronic Records:** Local school systems must retain all emails and electronic records concerning a credible allegation of sexual abuse or misconduct by an employee for a minimum of three years.

While the intent of the bill is to enhance community transparency following adverse situations, HB1168/SB0685 sets up required procedures and disclosures that have the potential to conflict with existing state and federal statute given the complexity of responses and confidential nature of these events. The bill has improved over a prior introduction which would have conceivably covered each and every time a teacher or staff member was removed, including unfounded allegations where staff return the next day or soon after. The prior version also had automatic triggers for crisis response that did not align with best practices in trauma-informed care.

Specific concerns remain, however, including requiring communications and relevant resources to be provided in certain cases of a teacher/staff removal which could alert students (beyond those who may be directly involved in the incident) and the community to details of an allegation which are unfounded and still under investigation. Removal of a teacher/staff member is a personnel matter and therefore there are implications for commenting on ongoing legal matters, often requiring limited information to be provided publicly. Especially given the above, communications about a teacher/staff member removal are currently addressed on a case-by-case basis to account for varying factors. School systems would also experience administrative burdens to create, maintain, and update website data with precise care not to reveal child abuse, personnel, and student information – all of which is confidential under other areas of state and federal law. In some cases, even the inclusion of the name of a school involved in a public report could inadvertently reveal identifying information.

Given the overall intent of this bill is to ensure school systems have a response plan in place for potentially traumatic incidents, and to ensure stakeholders are aware of incidents that may impact the school community, a necessity for proactive crisis communications planning may more naturally fit within existing school emergency

plans. Instead of requiring real-time communications during an investigation and requiring an after-action review, schools can share communication plans at the beginning of each school year, before any issues arise, that spells out the school system’s response expectations, and identifies the expected process as well as the minimal information that parents could get in the event of a removal/investigation.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

<b>Charles County - Student Bus Transportation Providers - Provider Displacement</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">SB0574</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Charles County Senators	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring the Charles County Board of Education to provide at least 10 years' notice and hold a certain public hearing before taking any action that results in a certain displacement of a person that has been providing student bus transportation services in Charles County; and requiring the Board of Education to provide written notice by registered mail at least 2 years before the displacement of a person that has been providing student bus transportation services.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** SB0574 is a local bill for the Charles County Public School System that sets an untenable precedent for all school systems in Maryland and contracting of public services in general. Specifically, the bill requires that before taking any action that results in the displacement of a person that has been providing student bus transportation services in Charles County, the local board of education must provide notice of the intent to displace persons providing that service in Charles County at least ten years in advance. SB0574 is similar to SB0727 from 2025, however SB0574 introduces more detailed notification requirements and a secondary two-year notice period. Both versions require at least one public hearing regarding the advisability of the Board providing student bus services. Within one year after the hearing, and at least two years before the actual displacement, SB0574 requires that the Board provide written notice of the displacement to the provider via registered mail.

SB0574 defines “displacement” as the provision of student bus transportation services by the Charles County Board of Education that precludes a private person that has been providing the services from continuing to provide the services. Circumstances that would not constitute displacement include when the local board does not renew a contract for cause, and at the end of the contract term, contracts with another person to provide the service, or the person providing the student bus transportation services has been found to have acted in a manner threatening to public health or safety, has been found to have committed a breach of contract, or refuses to continue to provide services under the terms and conditions of an existing agreement.

In Howard County, student bus transportation is currently provided entirely by private bus contractors. As transportation costs continue to increase, local school systems need the flexibility to determine if contracting, in-house, or a combination of both are the best fit based on budgetary constraints, availability of drivers, and other operational considerations.

Beyond the unknowns in terms of planning for school bus operations ten years into the future, and despite modifications made since SB0727, if passed SB0524 has the potential to stifle competitive contracting. Private bus companies would take precedence over other potentially cost-effective alternatives, driving up public costs at the expense of other school system priorities. School systems need to be able to manage performance and make

adjustments to contracts based on performance in accordance with the expectations set in the bid. As written, the proposed legislation could supersede what a local board of education has in their contract with the provider. This measure would also limit a local board’s ability to address contractor performance issues in a timely manner. In any contracting, whether for buses or other services used by government agencies, giving a vendor this advantage is bad public policy.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – The Board opposed SB0727 in 2025. The bill had an initial hearing in the Senate, with no further movement.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

<b>Language Acquisition Tracking Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children - Establishment</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB0879</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b> <a href="#">SB0502</a>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Bagnall	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Senator King
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Establishing the Language Acquisition Tracking Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children in the State Department of Education; establishing a State Coordinator of Language Acquisition for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children within the Department to coordinate the Program and create a parent and guardian resource to help parents and guardians of deaf or hard of hearing children track a child's language acquisition progress; establishing the Language Acquisition for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children Advisory Council; etc.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB0879/SB0502 proposes the creation of a Language Acquisition Tracking Program designed to monitor the communication development of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children in Maryland under the age of nine. Managed by a newly appointed State Coordinator, the initiative aims to ensure these students achieve language milestones comparable to their hearing peers through regular assessments of both signed and spoken language. The legislation mandates the development of a parent and guardian resource to help families navigate educational goals and requires an Advisory Council to oversee the selection of appropriate testing tools. Furthermore, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must publish an annual report detailing the progress and literacy outcomes of participating children while maintaining strict privacy standards. This program seeks to integrate language tracking into existing Individualized Education Programs (IEP) and other specialized learning plans to better support early childhood development.

HCPSS Hearing Services staff have identified several areas of concern with HB0879/SB0502 and the proposed Language Acquisition Tracking Program, often referred to as LEAD-K. In particular:

Scope and Redundancy

- Age Range: The bill covers children up to age nine, whereas other states using LEAD-K stop at age five. Extending this to age nine would “muddy the waters” with existing language tracking (such as DIBELS or MAP testing) and create confusion for families transitioning between IDEA Part C and Part B services.
- Redundant Processes: Much of what the bill proposes is already required or occurring through Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs), IEPs, and Section 504 plans. For example, the requirement to update a plan if a child does not show progress would essentially be “double dipping” because it is already a legal requirement.

- Existing Infrastructure: MSDE already has the infrastructure, tracking systems, and staff (including Deaf and Hard of Hearing specialists) to monitor progress and address concerns.

#### The Advisory Council and Assessment Tool

- Authority and Composition: There are concerns about giving an Advisory Council, which as written in the bill includes those which will undoubtedly have competing voices and agendas, the authority to select a mandated language assessment tool. MSDE is excluded from membership, and the Maryland Department of Health's scope is limited to children aged birth to three, making them ill-equipped to advise on older children.
- Assessment Tool Limitations: It is unclear in the bill who would create such a tool and how normative data would be collected for a broad population of students (ages 0–9). There is also concern that a mandated tool would restrict a school system's ability to determine what is best for an individual child.
- Testing Frequency: Requiring assessments every six months for children up to age nine is not administratively and operationally feasible for most local school systems.

#### Impact on Families

- Communication Modality Selection: The bill requires parents to choose between assessing signed or spoken language acquisition. This puts undue pressure on families, as young children are often exposed to multiple modalities depending on technology (like hearing aids or cochlear implants) and parental fluency.
- Existing Resources: Much of the resources required to be created under the bill for parents already exist through programs like MSDE Partners for Success, which provide workshops and sign language classes.

#### Personnel and Reporting Concerns

- State Coordinator: MSDE already has staff for the functions described in the State Coordinator role. There is also a concern regarding potential discrimination if a qualified hearing individual were barred from the role, as the bill expresses a preference for a Deaf and Hard of Hearing coordinator.
- Student Confidentiality: The proposed annual report in the bill raises privacy concerns. In smaller counties with low populations, disaggregating data by student numbers or specific categories could make it easy to identify individual children and thus could not be published.
- Children with Additional Needs: There is concern that the bill does not adequately consider children with additional needs who may progress in smaller increments, and that the Council might “redefine progress” outside of existing standards.

While well intentioned, given the above concerns, a program such as described in HB0879/SB0502 would be best developed by educational and service experts using existing resources, as opposed to an in-flexible legislative mandate.

#### **Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

State Board of Sign Language Interpreters - Membership and Licensing	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1192</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b> <a href="#">SB0645</a>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Bagnall	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Senator King
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Expanding the membership of and altering the quorum requirements for the State Board of Sign Language Interpreters; requiring the nomination process to include outreach to underrepresented deaf, deafblind, and interpreter communities; authorizing the Governor to remove certain members of the Board under certain circumstances; altering the date from July, 2024 to December 31, 2026, by which the Board must establish certain licensing requirements and by which sign language interpreters must meet certain licensing requirements; etc.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB1192/SB0645 proposes structural and administrative updates to the Maryland State Board of Sign Language Interpreters. The legislation seeks to expand board membership from seven to eleven individuals, ensuring broader representation from the deaf, deafblind, and professional interpreter communities. Key changes include granting the Governor the authority to remove board members for poor attendance and extending the deadlines for establishing and obtaining mandatory professional licenses. Additionally, the board is tasked with conducting a comprehensive study on specialized certifications for legal and medical settings before implementing new regulations.

Following passage of the Maryland Sign Language Interpreters Act in 2023 which established a licensing and regulatory system for sign language interpreters, Maryland moved towards equitable and elevated access for members of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. Students and families within HCPSS and across Maryland deserve to have high-quality interpretation services as part of their educational experience.

In May 2026, following the initial deadline for licensure regulation creation in the law, the Maryland State Board of Sign Language Interpreters issued regulations which raised major concerns for local school systems and sign language professionals working in the education field. After months of deliberations, the regulations were ultimately held until this year’s legislative session to determine the best avenue forward for stakeholders.

HB1192/SB0645 attempts to address the concerns that arose from the regulatory process, which staff appreciate. **The following are suggested amendments that would further the goals of the Maryland State Board of Sign Language Interpreters, while giving flexibility to meet the intent of the original law:**

- **Licensure Timeline:** The bill extends the deadline by which the Board must establish and publish general licensing requirements from July 1, 2024, to December 31, 2026. Consequently, the date by which interpreters must meet these licensing requirements is delayed until July 1, 2027. The six months proposed between the publishing of licensure requirements and the requirement for licensure is too short. Interpreters need time for certification, with the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment – EIPA taking as long as one year to return the results. Time should also be allotted for local board of education to budget for any expected changes in salaries due to licensure requirements.
- **Board Makeup:** The bill requires a Deaf and Hard of Hearing member from the Maryland Association of the Deaf specifically. This is a paid membership organization that is not representative of all Deaf and Hard of Hearing people across Maryland. A specific appointment for an individual affiliated with an implementing agency in education should also be represented on the board. While the increase in membership for the Board in general is a positive, filling all seats specific to interpreters for the deaf with those who are licensed may be difficult. The perspective of an unlicensed interpreter may be important to this conversation, especially as the process and regulations for obtaining licensure are formulated.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – SUPPORT with **AMENDMENTS**
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – SUPPORT with **AMENDMENTS**

The following bills can be found in this report from March 4, 2026, Legislative Committee Meeting:

<b>Education - Agreements, Procurement Contracts, and Memoranda of Understanding - Reporting and Publication</b>		Pg 26
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0116</a>	Cross File Number: <a href="#">SB0147</a>	
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE		
<b>Public Schools - Individuals With Disabilities - Accessibility and Emergency Planning</b>		Pg 27
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0311</a>	Cross File Number: <a href="#">SB0507</a>	
Position Recommendation: SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS		
<b>School Construction - Nonpublic Special Education School Renovation Program – Established</b>		Pg 27
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0854</a>	Cross File Number:	
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE		
<b>Local School Systems - Educator Screening - Educator Identification Clearinghouse (School Personnel Vetting and Hiring Transparency Act)</b>		Pg 28
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0856</a>	Cross File Number: <a href="#">SB0648</a>	
Position Recommendation: SUPPORT		
<b>Public School Students - Recognition of External Diagnosis of Autism</b>		Pg 29
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0901</a>	Cross File Number:	
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE		
<b>Prekindergarten Programs and Primary and Secondary Schools - Student Privacy Policy Requirements and Discrimination Reporting</b>		Pg 30
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB1032</a>	Cross File Number: <a href="#">SB0659</a>	
Position Recommendation: SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS		
<b>Education - Artificial Intelligence - Guidelines, Professional Development, and Collaborative (Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act)</b>		Pg 32
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB1057</a>	Cross File Number: <a href="#">SB0720</a>	
Position Recommendation: <i>For Board Discussion</i>		
<b>Public Ethics Law - Participation Restrictions and Requirements for Local Governments and School Boards</b>		Pg 33
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB1074</a>	Cross File Number:	
Position Recommendation: <i>For Board Discussion</i>		
<b>Public Schools – Content Standards, Curriculum, and Bullying Policies – Culture and History of Palestine</b>		Pg 34
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB1202</a>	Cross File Number:	
Position Recommendation: OPPOSE		
<b>Education – Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals</b>		Pg 35
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB1205</a>	Cross File Number: SB0764	
Position Recommendation: SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS		
<b>Education - Public Schools - Service Contracts and Professional Development</b>		Pg 36
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB1254</a>	Cross File Number: <a href="#">SB0904</a>	

<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	
<b>Public Schools - Interscholastic Athletics - Academic Eligibility</b>	Pg 38
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1275</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	
<b>Preliminary Subdivision and Site Plans – Safe School Route Reports – Requirement</b>	Pg 39
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1296</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> SUPPORT	
<b>Education - Public School Construction - Funding</b>	Pg 39
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1329</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b> <a href="#">SB0939</a>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> SUPPORT	
<b>Special Education - Individualized Education Program - Notification of Missed Services</b>	Pg 40
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1368</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS	
<b>Public and Nonpublic Schools - Employing Individuals Charged With Crimes - Prohibition</b>	Pg 41
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1418</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	
<b>Collective Bargaining - Public Employees - Revocation of Certification and School and Library Employees' Right to Strike</b>	Pg 42
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1492</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	
<b>Labor and Employment - Paid Leave - Attendance at School Functions</b>	Pg 43
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1524</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	
<b>Education - Program of Educational Accountability - Alterations (Comprehensive Outcomes and Measures of Progress for Supporting Schools (COMPASS Act))</b>	Pg 43
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1582</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> SUPPORT	
<b>Public School System Contracts - Prohibited Provisions</b>	Pg 44
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1604</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b> <a href="#">SB0646</a>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> SUPPORT	
<b>Income Tax - Credit for Student Loan Debt of Educators Working in Public Schools</b>	Pg 45
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">SB0882</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> SUPPORT	
<b>Howard County – Office of the Inspector General – Access to Public Records</b>	Pg 46
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HoCo 15-26</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> <i>For Board Discussion</i>	

## Proposed Statewide Bills for Board Position

Education - Agreements, Procurement Contracts, and Memoranda of Understanding - Reporting and Publication	
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB0116</a>	Cross File Number: <a href="#">SB0147</a>
Primary Sponsor: Delegate Miller	Primary Sponsor: Senator Ready
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>
Position Recommendation: <b>OPPOSE</b>	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring the reporting of certain procurement contracts and memoranda of understanding entered into by certain public elementary and secondary education systems in the State; and requiring each local school system to make publicly available on the local school system's website certain in-kind services agreements, procurement contracts, and memoranda of understanding.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** If passed, HB0116/SB0147 would mandate that educational entities report all procurement contracts and memoranda of understanding to the Maryland State Superintendent of Schools annually. Local school systems – which include county boards, county superintendents, and individual public schools under the bill – would be required to report and publish several types of financial and operational documents, including:

- Procurement contracts.
- Memoranda of understanding (MOUs).
- In-kind services agreements (required for public website disclosure).

The reports submitted to the State Superintendent must specifically include:

- A complete list of every procurement contract and MOU entered into by the entity.
- The total amount required to be paid under each procurement contract.
- The total amount actually paid by the entity during the preceding fiscal year.

In addition to reporting to the State Superintendent, local school systems must make these agreements publicly available on their websites.

- By September 1, 2026, they must post all agreements entered into between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026.
- For any agreement entered into on or after July 1, 2026, the system must post it online within 30 days of entering the agreement.

Individual schools and county superintendents can fulfill their reporting obligations by submitting the required information to their respective local board of education by a date set by the board. The county board is then responsible for including that information in the report it sends to the State Superintendent by September 1 each year.

School systems are already required to enter contracts over the threshold established by the local board of education in the State's e-procurement system for the public to access. In Howard County, the Procurement Office has worked to make these available on the newly implemented contracting system as well. HB0116/SB0147, however, includes all agreements regardless of threshold which would burden school system staff at both the central and individual school level. This would undoubtedly require additional staff to support the Procurement Office.

Additionally, while the bill indicates these reporting requirements do not apply to any procurement contract or MOU that contains information prohibited from disclosure by law or information that may be withheld from disclosure under existing law, review of each item regardless of threshold and looking back retrospectively would be an extensive endeavor that involves outreach to vendors for their input on what they might consider proprietary/commercial information.

### Additional Information:

- Prior Introduction – None.

- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

<b>Public Schools - Individuals With Disabilities - Accessibility and Emergency Planning</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB0311</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b> <a href="#">SB0507</a>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Kaufman	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Senator Zucker
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring each local school system to identify, in its regular safety evaluation, issues of accessibility for individuals with disabilities; requiring local school systems to include in a certain confidential annual report instances in which a public school facility became inaccessible for a student with a disability in a manner that could impede evacuations or emergency response; and requiring a certain annual report to be confidential and limiting disclosure of the report to certain individuals.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB0311/SB0507 is a re-introduction of a bill from 2025 that was vastly improved as it moved through the General Assembly. The House amended and passed the bill with significant changes to address liability issues presented with the original bill. The new version, and as introduced this session, requires that under existing Education Article § 7–1510 and the Maryland Safe to Learn Act, schools must include associated safety issues of accessibility for individuals with disabilities within annual school safety evaluations. Additionally, within existing annual reporting submitted to the Maryland Center for School Safety on incidents of threats and emergency responses during the past year, the amendments require local school systems to identify instances in which a public school facility became inaccessible for a student with a disability in a manner that could impede evacuation or an emergency response.

With the amendments made in 2025, HB0311/SB0507 places the information collected properly under an entity with a focus on school safety. Additionally, the bill specifically calls for the reports to remain confidential and exempts their release under the Maryland Public Information Act. One provision within the restrictions on release of the information, however, indicates a report can be released to a member of the Maryland General Assembly upon request. This provision should be removed as it creates an improper confidentiality loophole.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – The Board supported HB0694 as amended during the 2025 session. HB0694 passed the House with no further movement.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS

<b>School Construction - Nonpublic Special Education School Renovation Program – Established</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB0854</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Boyce	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Establishing the Nonpublic Special Education School Renovation Program in the Interagency Commission on School Construction to provide grant funding to certain nonpublic special education schools for certain renovations and improvements to classrooms, upgrades to residential cottages

on school grounds, health, safety and accessibility upgrades, infrastructure modernization, and certain new construction.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** This bill establishes the Nonpublic Special Education School Renovation Program administered by the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) to provide grants to eligible nonpublic special education schools for capital improvements. IAC may prioritize applications for projects that (1) address student health or safety concerns; (2) are necessary to comply with standards set by the Maryland State Department of Education; or (3) are for nonpublic special education schools with a high percentage of students who are residents of the state. The bill authorizes the Governor to include an appropriation to the program in the annual budget bill.

As a legislative platform, the Board opposes efforts to provide public funding for purchases that would divert public funds to assist private schools. While HB0854 does not allocate a specified amount for the newly formed program, it opens the door for State funds to be redirected to nonpublic special education schools. Public schools, in a cost sharing model with the State, already pay tuition for local special education students who attend these schools that presumably is set at a cost to cover their needs including infrastructure and capital improvements. With total resources for education limited, diversion of public funds to private schools reduces resources available for public schools

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

<b>Local School Systems - Educator Screening - Educator Identification Clearinghouse (School Personnel Vetting and Hiring Transparency Act)</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB0856</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b> <a href="#">SB0648</a>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Ebersole	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Senator Hettleman
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> SUPPORT	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring the State Department of Education to register each local school system in the State as an associate member of a certain national membership organization; and requiring each local school system in the State to utilize the Educator Identification Clearinghouse to screen individuals who receive an offer of employment for an educator position that requires a license and ensure that each individual who receives an offer applies for and obtains the appropriate license before certain occurrences.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB0856/SB0648 revisits an issue within a bill from 2025, with improvements to reduce administrative burdens on local school systems. The bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to register each local school system in the State as an associate member of a national membership organization that provides access to the Educator Identification Clearinghouse and to pay any applicable fees and dues associated with the membership. Each local school system must utilize the clearinghouse through the national membership organization to screen each individual who receives, on or after October 1, 2026, an offer of employment for an educator position that requires a license. In addition, each local school system must ensure that each individual who receives such an offer (1) applies for the appropriate license after the offer of employment and before the start of employment and (2) obtains the appropriate license before any interaction with children.

MSDE is currently a member of the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC), which is the only national membership organization that meets the bill’s criteria. From [NASDTEC’s frequently asked questions](#):

NASDTEC, through the clearinghouse, maintains a database of all disciplinary actions reported by NASDTEC members and disseminates this information to all participating NASDTEC jurisdictions. The goal of the clearinghouse is to provide each NASDTEC member state/jurisdiction with a notification of an action taken against the certificate/license of an educator by other member states/jurisdictions and in doing so, to protect the interests of children served by the professional education community within the United States and beyond.

Once an educator’s misconduct case is final and the results made public, the prosecuting jurisdiction reports to the clearinghouse information on the adverse action taken against a license or certificate, including public reprimands and denials. The clearinghouse organizes the data and makes it accessible to NASDTEC members who can then compare the information to their current lists of licensed educators and applicants. In addition, the clearinghouse enables its members to maintain a comprehensive database, so every licensure applicant in a given jurisdiction can be checked against records in the clearinghouse. While the presence of a name in the database does not necessarily preclude an individual from successfully obtaining a license in a jurisdiction, it does provide the governing agency a safety net enabling officials to review the nature of the adverse action before issuing the certificate or license.

HCPSS is not currently a member of NASDTEC, however Human Resources staff have previously researched the benefits and limitations of the clearinghouse. Currently, when HCPSS prepares an offer of employment for a licensed position, Human Resources conducts the MD486 background check which includes a certification check portion for those who already or have previously held a license. For those who are just obtaining their Maryland license, candidates must upload proof that they have created an account with MSDE’s TEACH portal. This is in addition to the full human resources background check including fingerprints that is done prior to employment.

As introduced for the 2026 session, this bill mitigates the unfunded mandate the original bill presented. MSDE would be responsible for paying for applicable fees and dues associated with membership for the local school systems, and the scope is limited to utilization of the clearinghouse to screen only those *offered* a position, as opposed to prior versions where each individual who *applied* for an educator position within the local school system on or after July 1, 2026.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – The Board supported amendments to a similar bill, SB0845, during the 2025 session. SB0845 passed the Senate, with no further movement in the House.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – SUPPORT
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – SUPPORT

<b>Public School Students - Recognition of External Diagnosis of Autism</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB0901</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Roberts	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring a school to recognize a student's external diagnosis of autism from certain professionals until the school completes an initial evaluation; requiring a school to initiate an evaluation of a student within 30 days of receiving an external diagnosis of autism and written consent from the student's parent; requiring a school to provide certain supports to a student during the evaluation; and requiring a school to continue to provide supports to a student until the evaluation is complete and a certain determination is made.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB0901 proposes new requirements for schools to acknowledge external Autism diagnoses provided by qualified medical or mental health professionals. Under the bill, educational institutions must honor these outside assessments as valid until the school system finishes its own initial evaluation. Once a diagnosis and parental consent are submitted, the school has a 30-day window to begin its formal internal review process. The bill then mandates that students receive recommended supports during this interim period to ensure they are not left without assistance while awaiting a final determination. Schools are expected to follow the external recommendations unless they present safety risks or legal conflicts.

HCPSS Department of Special Education supports early identification and access to services for all students. As such, the bill is not supported as currently drafted. The bill requires schools to recognize an external diagnosis of Autism until a school evaluation is complete but does not extend the same recognition or supports to students with other diagnoses. This narrow focus raises equity concerns and risks creating practices that conflict with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which protects the rights of all students with qualifying disabilities, not just those with Autism. Private diagnoses are also costly to obtain, meaning only those with financial resources will likely be able to access, creating further inequities. Outside practitioners also often recommend services that are beyond the scope of what school systems can provide. If this bill moves forward, we would be providing services for students that aren't formally recognized and thus we don't receive funding for.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

<b>Prekindergarten Programs and Primary and Secondary Schools - Student Privacy Policy Requirements and Discrimination Reporting</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1032</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b> <a href="#">SB0659</a>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Wolek	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Senator Love
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring public and nonpublic primary and secondary schools to adopt certain written student privacy policies and procedures; requiring nonpublic prekindergarten programs and nonpublic primary and secondary schools, beginning September 1, 2027, to report the number of incidents of alleged discrimination to the State Department of Education annually; and requiring, beginning December 31, 2027, the submission of an annual report discussing relevant findings and trends for the immediately preceding reporting period.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB1032/SB0659 proposes new regulations for schools regarding the protection of student privacy and the reporting of discrimination. Initially, both public and private schools are required to adopt specific written policies and procedures to protect the privacy rights of students and their parents or guardians regarding the access and release of student records. The specific policy requirements for public schools include:

- Access for Inspection: Schools must include a policy statement assuring that all records pertaining to a student are available to the student's parent or guardian for inspection or review.
- Request Procedures: Schools must establish procedures for parents or guardians to follow when requesting to inspect or review these records.
- Consent for Disclosure: The policy must state that the school will not disclose personal identifying information from a student's record without the prior written consent of the parent or guardian, unless otherwise allowed by law.

- Maintenance of Disclosure Records: Schools must maintain a written record of all requests for and disclosures of personal identifying information. This record must include:
  - The student’s full name (first, middle, and last).
  - The name of the reviewer.
  - The date (month, day, and year) of the review.
  - The purpose of the review.
- Parental Notification: Schools are required to have procedures for informing parents or guardians about these specific privacy policies and procedures.

The bill further introduces discrimination reporting requirements that are explicitly directed at nonpublic prekindergarten programs and nonpublic primary or secondary schools, rather than public institutions. Beginning September 1, 2027, and every September 1 thereafter, these schools must submit a report to the Maryland State Department of Education covering the following information from the preceding 12 months:

- Number of Alleged Incidents: Schools must report the total number of alleged incidents of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.
- Scope of Incidents: The reporting includes discrimination against:
  - A student.
  - A prospective student, or a parent or guardian of a student or prospective student, if the incident occurred on school premises, school transportation, or at a school-sponsored event.
- Specific Incident Details: For every incident, the school must provide:
  - The type of discrimination alleged.
  - The category of the complainant (student, prospective student, or parent/guardian).
  - The category of the alleged offender (student, prospective student, parent/guardian, school employee, school volunteer, or another individual).

As written, the policy provisions of HB1032/SB0659 closely align to the rights afforded parents and guardians under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This federal law protects the privacy of student education records, applying to all schools receiving U.S. Department of Education funds. It grants parents or eligible students the right to inspect records, request corrections, and control disclosure of personally identifiable information.

While closely aligned with FERPA and HCPSS Policy 9050 Student Records, there is the potential for the bill’s policy requirements to create confusion or unintended overlap with existing statutory requirements for student records. Definition and language variations between FERPA and HB1032/SB0569 for instance include what records would be covered, with the bill referencing records “pertaining to a student” and FERPA specifically defining an educational record as those “directly related to a student and that are maintained by an educational agency or institution indication” with further parameters for the specific record types. For this reason, staff recommends removal of the policy mandates within HB1032/SB0569, leaving only what appears to be the intent of the bill to bring nonpublic schools into compliance with privacy and discriminations measures already in place for public schools.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS

Education - Artificial Intelligence - Guidelines, Professional Development, and Collaborative (Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act)	
Bill Number: <a href="#">HB1057</a>	Cross File Number: <a href="#">SB0720</a>
Primary Sponsor: Delegate Ebersole	Primary Sponsor: Senator Hester
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>
Position Recommendation: <i>For Board Discussion</i>	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring the State Department of Education to provide certain guidance on artificial intelligence to Local school systems, educators, parents, and student through an online platform; requiring the Department to publish certain guidance for certain groups; requiring the Department to develop strategies to implement certain guidelines and best practices; requiring each county board to designate a coordinator for the use of artificial intelligence in the local school system; etc.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB1057/SB0720 proposes a comprehensive framework for integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology into the Maryland’s education system. The legislation mandates that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) establish ethical guidelines and online resources for students, parents, and school staff. To ensure local accountability, every county school board must appoint a dedicated coordinator and implement official policies aligned with state standards. The bill further emphasizes workforce readiness and professional development, requiring that educators receive specialized training in AI literacy by 2027. Additionally, it creates the Maryland AI Education Collaborative to monitor technological trends, evaluate instructional tools, and provide annual progress reports to the General Assembly.

Specific requirements for local school systems include:

- Develop an AI Policy: Within 120 days after MSDE releases its initial guidance, every local school system must establish an artificial intelligence policy that aligns with state guidance.
- Designate a Coordinator: Each county board is required to appoint a coordinator to act as a liaison between the local school system and the State. This individual is responsible for overseeing the productive and ethical use of AI systems within their specific school system.
- Follow Procurement Standards: When acquiring AI tools, local school systems must ensure their procurement process is consistent with State Finance and Procurement Article standards.
- Implement Professional Development: MSDE will coordinate training focused on AI literacy and technical expertise, with local school systems’ facilitating. This will follow a “train-the-trainer” model, with the goal of having educators trained by July 1, 2027.
- Compensation for Training: Teachers must be compensated for participating in AI professional development through time, money, or recertification credits.

Locally, HCPSS has been working to address the use of AI in schools, and [for students in particular](#), in a systematic manner. Last spring, staff pulled together a stakeholder group to develop usage guidelines to establish clear expectations and best practices for the ethical, responsible, and effective use of AI systems. Training on the usage guidelines began in the fall for instructional staff, and additional training and outreach continues for staff, administrators, students, and families. The strategic goal is to integrate tools that foster critical thinking and creativity while maintaining academic integrity.

At the state level, MSDE is currently undertaking work in several areas outlined by the bill, including publishing statewide AI guidance, developing implementation resources for local school systems and educators, and establishing clear expectations related to equity, privacy, academic integrity, and vendor governance. The bill is aligned with this work, but potentially redundant and overreaching. Specifically related to the bill’s requirement for MSDE to annually evaluate and certify AI tools being purchased by the local school systems, MSDE plans to recommend the bill be amended to allow for support and resources to maintain local procurement authority. They

are also recommending any staff training be focused on outcomes rather than a specified model as currently written in HB1057/SB0720.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – Delegate Wu; Senator Hester.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – *For Committee Discussion*
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – *For Board Discussion*

<b>Public Ethics Law - Participation Restrictions and Requirements for Local Governments and School Boards</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1074</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Hornberger	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> <i>For Board Discussion</i>	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Altering the definition of “qualifying relative” to include a son-in-law and a daughter-in-law for provisions of law governing prohibitions against government officials or employees participating in matters involving a qualifying relative; requiring that the conflict of interest provisions or regulations adopted by a county, municipal corporation, or school board be equivalent to or exceed certain provisions of State law and authorize removal of a certain official for certain violations; etc.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB1074 initially broadens the scope of familial conflicts and strengthens local oversight within Maryland’s public ethics laws. The legislation expands the definition of a qualifying relative to include in-laws, thereby preventing government officials from participating in matters that benefit these specific family members. Furthermore, the bill mandates that local governments and local boards of education adopt conflict-of-interest and lobbying regulations that are at least as strict as state-level requirements.

[HCPSS Ethics Regulations](#) follow the state Ethics Commission provisions. “Qualified Relative” is currently defined as a spouse, domestic partner, parent, child, and sibling. Changes would be needed to align definitions of relatives as proposed under HB1074.

HB1074 further grants new authority to governing bodies to remove officials from office for ethics violations. It also requires that any formal recommendations for such removals must be made available to the public.

HB1074 would necessitate several specific revisions to the HCPSS Ethics Regulations regarding the removal of Board members and the underlying standards for violations. Currently, the HCPSS Ethics Regulations state that a violation by a Board member constitutes grounds for “removal from office where provided by law.” HB1074 changes this by requiring that local board ethics regulations must explicitly “authorize the school board to remove a member of the school board from office for a violation of the conflict of interest regulations.” This shifts the authority from a general reference to state law to a specific power granted within the local regulations.

Under the current HCPSS regulations, all information regarding a complaint filed with the Ethics Panel is treated as confidential unless the Board authorizes its release. HB1074 would override this confidentiality in specific cases by requiring that the local board’s ethics commission “make public any recommendation to remove a member of the school board.”

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.

- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – *For Committee Discussion*
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – *For Board Discussion*

<b>Public Schools – Content Standards, Curriculum, and Bullying Policies – Culture and History of Palestine</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1202</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Acevero	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring the State Board of Education to develop certain content standards regarding the culture and history of Palestine to be included in certain State standards for social studies; requiring the Department to develop certain curriculum guides and instructional resources regarding the culture and history of Palestine in alignment with certain content standards; requiring each public school to include Palestinian culture and history in the social studies curriculum beginning in the 2027-2028 school year; etc.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB1202 proposes a mandate for the Maryland State Board of Education to integrate the history and culture of Palestine into the social studies curriculum. The legislation requires the development of comprehensive content standards that focus on Palestinian traditions, identity, and the historical impact of displacement while maintaining a nonpartisan and factual academic approach. Additionally, the bill seeks to update school anti-bullying policies to explicitly include protections against harassment motivated by anti-Palestinian bias. By the 2027–2028 school year, local boards must implement these new instructional guides and provide professional development resources for educators.

As a legislative platform the Board supports local decision making in the development of curriculum that accounts for a balance of educational practices, available resources, public input, and accountability that is informed and guided by State Board established standards and models, rather than prescriptive legislative mandates.

While at the discretion of MSBE, it is important to note that changes in standards, as well as any resulting basic curriculum and extracurricular programs that may result from HB1202, can have large fiscal impacts on local school systems due to the significant amount of work that needs to be done in order to implement them with fidelity. When broadening the scope of standards and programmatic requirements, there is also the potential to overburden curriculum. Teachers have a finite time in a given unit/year to fit in each new mandated objective.

While staff opposes the bill because of both the unfunded mandate and the removal of local discretion in curriculum, the history of Palestine is incorporated through teachings on history of the middle east in Modern World History at the high school level, with further inclusion at the middle school level in development. Within existing anti-bullying policies, protections against harassment already includes hate/bias incidents that are motivated by race, color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, disability, national origin, and/or homeless status, making HB1202 redundant.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

<b>Education – Minimum Wage for Education Support Professionals</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1205</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b> SB0764
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Wims	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Senator Zucker
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Establishing a minimum wage rate of at least \$25 per hour to be paid by county boards of education to certain education support professionals beginning on July 1, 2028; and requiring the State Department of Education to report to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before December 1, 2026, on an estimate of the total cost of implementing a \$25 per hour minimum wage for education support professionals.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB1205/SB0764 requires local boards of education to pay education support professionals a minimum wage of \$25.00 per hour beginning July 1, 2028. An “education support professional” is defined under the bills as a noncertificated public school employee designated as part of nonsupervisory bargaining unit. The Maryland State Board of Education would adopt regulations for school systems to carry out the provisions of the bill.

Under a similar bill proposed in 2025, HCPSS estimated 2,100 FTE fell under the Education Support Professional (HCEA-ESP) bargaining unit in Howard County. Of those, approximately 923 FTE earned less than \$25.00 per hour. This is the largest cohort impacted by this legislation, but would also include those under the AFSCME unit given the definitions in the bill. The Department of Legislative Services [estimated statewide the bill would result in total wages increases of \\$198,900,000](#) in FY2026.

While staff understand the intent of HB1205/SB0764 to recognize and uplift the importance of education support professionals, without dedicated funding, that increase as of July 1, 2028, would have a substantial impact on the HCPSS budget. The bill would also fundamentally alter the relationship of step/grade/classification for the HCPSS salary schedules, and also for the classification and compensation relationship to all other salary schedules and the relationship job classifications.

Given the cost-prohibitive nature of this bill in prior years, and an indication from the above analysis that the Maryland State Department of Education could not reliably estimate the total breadth of the impacted employees, HB1205/SB0764 differs in that they included a study to be conducted by December 1, 2026. A report based on this study must include an estimate of the total cost of implementing a \$25.00 per hour minimum wage for education support professionals, with cost estimates disaggregated by local school system. This report would accurately illustrate the costs associated with taking on these salary increases on both a state and local level, which must be done prior to any mandates being enacted by the General Assembly. **Staff recommends this study remain in HB1205/SB0764, with all other portions of the bill removed. In addition to the total cost estimates, the study should also include a discussion of the feasibility of implementing the salary increases within the current funding allotted to local school systems.**

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – The Board opposed a similar bill, SB0892/HB1369, during the 2025 session. Neither bill moved after initial hearings in the House and Senate.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – Delegate Feldmark; Senator Lam.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – SUPPORT with **AMENDMENTS**
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – SUPPORT with **AMENDMENTS**

Education - Public Schools - Service Contracts and Professional Development	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1254</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b> <a href="#">SB0904</a>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Feldmark	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Senator Zucker
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring a county board of education that seeks to enter into a service contract to submit to the State Department of Education information to justify the need for the service contract, and to submit a plan of assistance for employees adversely affected by the service contract; requiring the Department, by July 1, 2027, to design and develop a new system of professional development for paraeducators and other education support professionals; and requiring each county board to provide the new system to its employees by June 30, 2028.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB1254/SB0904 proposes rigorous new standards for public school service contracts and the professional development of support staff. Service contracts are defined under the bill as a procurement contract for services that will be provided to a public school. To prioritize internal staffing, county boards would be required to prove that outsourcing services yields cost savings while providing a formal assistance plan for any displaced employees. Specifically, the bill changes the outsourcing process in the following ways:

#### Required Justification and Alternatives

- A county board seeking a service contract must now submit a formal demonstration to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) showing that it has taken positive steps to consider alternatives. This includes evidence that the local board evaluated reorganizing or reevaluating current services and performance rather than outsourcing.

#### Strict Cost-Savings Thresholds

- Comparison of Costs: The board must submit calculations comparing the cost of the proposed contract against the cost of using school employees.
- 20 Percent Savings Requirement: The contract must demonstrate a savings of at least 20 percent over its duration.
- Protection of Pay and Benefits: Savings cannot be attributed to reductions in employee pay or fringe benefits.
- Comprehensive Cost Calculation: When calculating these costs, the local board must include direct costs (including fringe benefits), indirect overhead (like administrative salaries and rent), transitional costs (such as unemployment compensation), and any additional costs needed for school employees to perform the task (like new equipment or space).

#### Assistance for Affected Employees

If a service contract will adversely affect school employees, the county board must submit a formal plan of assistance that includes:

- Internal Placement: Efforts to place affected employees into vacant positions within the local school system.
- Contractor Hiring: Provisions within the service contract, where feasible, for the contractor to hire the displaced employees.
- Advance Notice: A requirement to provide advance notification to the employees impacted by the change.

## Oversight and Transparency

- To ensure these requirements are met, service contracts will be subject to an MSDE audit to verify the projected cost savings. The findings of these audits must be made available to the public.

While HB1254/SB0904 covers all services being provided under a contract, it is aimed at the use of contractual employees. The decline in available teaching and support staff is a concern in Howard County as well as across the state and nation. While employment of staff as direct employees is always the first choice in hiring for the school system, it is not always feasible. Currently, HCPSS uses contractors for positions where this is the case, especially for positions that may serve multiple schools/locations or are project/need based, such as related service providers to fulfill Individualized Education Program (IEP) requirements, information technology support professionals, and through the use of outside bus contractors. HB1254/SB0904 would create significant time constraints on a school system's ability to quickly hire and fill gaps in the workforce with subcontractors, which would negate their benefit when staff are required for essential functions of the school system.

The Board opposes legislation which limits local board flexibility in oversight of school system operations and budgets by mandating specific positions or operations. Limiting the ability to determine hiring practices and contract terms when subcontractors are needed will make it more difficult to get staff in front of students.

Additionally, HB1254 establishes a new system of professional development specifically for paraeducators and other education support professionals. The bill outlines several mandates for local school systems regarding the implementation and content of this training:

### Implementation Timeline and Format

- **Deadline for Local Systems:** Each county board must provide the new professional development system to every paraeducator and education support professional in their public schools by June 30, 2028.
- **Paid and During School Hours:** The training must be paid and conducted during weekday school hours.
- **In-Person Training:** The General Assembly's intent is that this training be delivered in-person and expanded to at least two days of high-quality professional development each school year.

### Required Training Content

- **Teamwork and Collaboration:** Training to help paraeducators and teachers work as a team to improve student outcomes, and instruction for support professionals on collaborating with teachers and paraeducators to improve student performance and behavior.
- **Health and Safety:** Instruction on improving student health, safety, and learning environments (including school buildings, buses, cafeterias, and athletic fields).
- **Safety Interventions:** Specific training for paraeducators on safe physical restraint and training for support professionals on crisis prevention and de-escalation.
- **Specialized Skills:** Job-specific skills training tailored to different groups of education support professionals.

### Coordination and Collective Bargaining

- **State Guidance:** Local boards will receive guidance from MSDE describing the new system by July 1, 2027.
- **Existing Agreements:** These new requirements do not override or diminish any obligations a county board may have under a collective bargaining agreement or employment benefit program that already establishes higher standards or greater requirements for training.

While HCPSS currently provides professional development tailored to education support professionals, new guidance from MSDE would likely mean costs to revamp and align these programs. With the deadline for MSDE to

produce the guidance by July 1, 2027, and the subsequent deadline for all staff to receive the new training by June 30, 2028, school systems will be working to make changes and implement new requirements amid an active school year.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – Delegate Feldmark.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

<b>Public Schools - Interscholastic Athletics - Academic Eligibility</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1275</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Wims	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring the standards of participation for student participation in interscholastic athletics established by a county board of education to include a process for a student to appeal a determination that the student is academically ineligible to participate in interscholastic athletics; and establishing certain requirements for a certain appeal process, including a certain provisional eligibility period.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB1275 proposes a new mandate requiring local boards of education to implement a formal appeals process for students deemed academically ineligible for sports. This legislation would ensure that students receive written notification detailing the reasons for their disqualification along with clear instructions on how to challenge the decision through an internal hearing. A critical feature of the bill is the creation of a provisional eligibility period, which allows students to continue practicing and competing for up to ten school days while their case is under review. If the school ultimately maintains the original ruling after the hearing, the student's suspension from athletics begins the following school day. This bill also indicates the protocols only address academic standing and do not limit a school's authority to discipline students for attendance violations or general misconduct.

HCPSS does not currently have a formal appeals process specific to academic eligibility for sports. Under changes made to HCPSS Policy 9070 Academic Eligibility for High School Extra Curricular Activities by the Board in November 2024, student athletes are allotted a one-time academic eligibility exemption under specified circumstances.

As a legislative platform the Board supports local decision making in the development of policy that accounts for a balance of educational practices, available resources, public input, and accountability that is informed and guided by State Board established standards and models, rather than legislative mandates as encompassed in HB1275. Legislation that limits local board decision-making authority may weaken the Board’s bond with the local community and adversely impact the community’s participation in the governance and operation of the school system.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

<b>Preliminary Subdivision and Site Plans – Safe School Route Reports – Requirement</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1296</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Terrasa	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> SUPPORT	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring a certain developer to prepare and submit a certain report concerning safe school routes, subject to certain requirements, as part of a preliminary subdivision or site plan; and prohibiting a local jurisdiction from granting a preliminary subdivision or site plan approval except under certain circumstances.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB1296 proposes new requirements for residential developers to ensure students have protected pathways to local public schools. Under this legislation, builders of projects with five or more units must submit a Safe School Route Report that identifies infrastructure gaps like missing sidewalks or unsafe crossings. The bill mandates that local counties withhold project approvals or building permits until these safety reports are reviewed and necessary mitigation measures are addressed. Developers are expected to coordinate with local boards of education and transportation officials to align new construction with existing pedestrian and bicycle networks.

Operationally, it is possible HB1296 may require additional staff time for review and coordination with developers, the extent of which would depend on the number of residential developments proposed within walking distance of a school in Howard County. Current Policy 5200 – Student Transportation identifies walk zones as:

- Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 5: 0.75 mile
- Grade 6 through Grade 8: 1.0 mile
- Grade 9 through Grade 12: 1.5 miles

Policy 5200 also indicates the school system may provide temporary transportation in a walk zone if unsafe conditions exist. Thus, there may be a potential savings in transportation costs of the school system if walk/bike access is improved, but there is not a clear way to determine that potential.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – Delegates Terrasa and Hill.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – *For Committee Discussion*
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – SUPPORT

<b>Education - Public School Construction - Funding</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1329</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b> <a href="#">SB0939</a>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Miller	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Senator Corderman
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> SUPPORT	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Codifying certain provisions of law that specify the intent of the General Assembly that the State provide at least a certain amount of funding for public school construction each year; and increasing the annual public school construction funding goal to at least \$550,000,000 beginning in fiscal year 2027.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** Under uncodified language passed in 2022, the General Assembly expressed its intent that the State provide at least \$450,000,000 annually for public school construction in order to maintain a relatively stable number of funded projects in the Capital Improvement Program. HB1329/SB0939 would amend that number starting in FY2027 to instead be \$550,000,000.

In Howard County, and across Maryland, needs for improvements to physical school infrastructure are vast. Under HB1450 Howard County Task Force to Study Revenue Options for School Capital Needs passed in 2024, local stakeholders came together to identify capital needs of HCPSS and study options for closing any identified funding gaps. The Task Force convened in August 2024, and issued its final report in early August 2025.

The report initially identified a \$40.7 million per year projected gap in capital funds on average for the next 10 years in Howard County. It also highlighted the volatility in available revenues over the years, while the cost of construction has continued to climb. One recommendation in particular was to increase the amount of State funding available in regular annual allocations. While HB1329/SB0939 does not guarantee additional funding, it would signal a move in the right direction to recognize the current gap in funding available statewide.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – SUPPORT
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – SUPPORT

<b>Special Education - Individualized Education Program - Notification of Missed Services</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1368</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Rosenberg	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring the parents of a child with a disability who has an individualized education program to receive a written notice when a certain special education or related service aid specified in the individualized education program is missed, incomplete, or interrupted as specified; requiring the notice to explain the missed, incomplete or interrupted service aid and the reason the service aid, or support was missed; requiring the notice to provide parents with information on requesting a certain meeting to discuss certain matters; etc.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB1368 proposes a new requirement for local school systems to formally notify parents when special education services are not delivered. Under this legislation, schools must provide written alerts if a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) is not followed, specifically when services are delayed, frequently missed, or significantly interrupted. These notices must include a justification for the failure, a plan to rectify the issue, and details on how parents can request compensatory services. Specifically, an alert is triggered under the following conditions:

- Failure to Initiate: The service or support was not started by the date established in the child's IEP.
- Daily Service Interruptions: For services required daily, an alert is triggered by five instances of missed, incomplete, or interrupted services within 10 consecutive school days.
- Periodic Service Interruptions: For services required a specific number of times within a set period, a notice is required if those services are missed or interrupted over a timeframe that is at least twice as long as the specified period.
- Patterns of Non-Delivery: Any pattern of missed, incomplete, or interrupted sessions that substantially limits the delivery of the required service, aid, or support.

These triggers exclude instances where the service was missed due to the child's absence from school. Once any of these conditions are met, the local school system must send the written notice to the parents within three school days.

HCPSS Department of Special Education supports transparency and family engagement but has concerns with HB1368 as written. While aligned with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the bill would create a significant administrative burden without additional staffing or funding. Requiring written notification for every missed or interrupted service would (1) increase paperwork and documentation demands for school staff; (2) divert time from direct student services; (3) duplicate existing district reporting systems; and (4) place a strain on staffing shortages that HCPSS and most school systems across the state are currently experiencing. Currently, updates on student performance are provided to families on a quarterly basis through progress reports and report cards. Updates to services occur on an annual basis, with opportunities to revisit and revise them throughout the year as needed.

In recognition of the need for increased staffing in order to meet IEP requirements in a timely manner and where sustained support systems that reduce administrative burdens for special educators are imperative, the Board supports HB1368 with an amendment to provide adequate special education funding before additional requirements are placed on local school systems. Recent studies by the [Blueprint Special Education Workgroup](#) have noted the need to revisit the way special education is funded in Maryland. This is particularly warranted given the Federal government has failed to supply 40 percent of the average per-pupil cost for special education that was pledged with the passage of IDEA.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – *For Committee Discussion*
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – SUPPORT with **AMENDMENTS**

<b>Public and Nonpublic Schools - Employing Individuals Charged With Crimes - Prohibition</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1418</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Arikan	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> <b>OPPOSE</b>	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Prohibiting public and nonpublic schools from hiring or retaining a certain employee who the school knows has been charged with a certain crime; requiring a nonpublic school or local school system contract to provide that a contractor or subcontractor may not knowingly assign an employee to work on school premises with certain access to children if the employee has been charged with a certain crime; and prohibiting a nonpublic school or local school system from rehiring an employee for 5 years if the employee fails to provide certain notice.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB1418 proposes a strict prohibition against public and nonpublic schools hiring or keeping any staff member who has been charged with specific serious crimes. The legislation expands the list of disqualifying offenses to include felonies, drug distribution, and crimes of moral turpitude, while applying these same standards to third-party contractors with access to children. Under this bill, employees are legally required to notify their employer within two business days of receiving a criminal charge. Failure to report these charges results in a five-year ban on rehiring, even if the legal case eventually ends in an acquittal or dismissal. To ensure compliance, the state has the power to revoke the operating authority of any private school that fails to adhere to these employment safety mandates.

Staff supports the intent of HB1418 to ensure the safety of students in our schools. It is unsure, however, how implementation would impact Human Resources processes. In particular, given the bill includes a review of all current employees, substantial infrastructure would be needed to research and identify any past charges. Additionally, although the bill gives clarity on how to handle an individual who has been charged but not convicted of a crime, the amendments under existing Education Article § 6–113 include charges and convictions for a list of

offenses that are not clearly defined. Unlike the current list that points to specific Maryland criminal statutes, the addition includes terms such as “crimes of moral turpitude” which would be difficult to determine. While this is generally known as crimes involving a component of fraud, it is not defined in statute. The bill also points to offenses under laws of another state that would constitute a crime if committed in this state.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

<b>Collective Bargaining - Public Employees - Revocation of Certification and School and Library Employees' Right to Strike</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1492</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Ebersole	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Establishing that certain certificated and noncertificated public school employees, library system employees, and employer organizations have the right to engage in a strike; repealing the authority of the Public Employee Relations Board to deny or revoke an employee organization's certification as exclusive representative of public employees in State and local government under certain circumstances; etc.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB1492 proposes a significant shift in labor relations by granting public school and library employees the legal right to strike. The legislation removes existing penalties for labor actions, such as the revocation of union certification or the immediate termination of striking workers. Under this bill, employers are strictly forbidden from permanently replacing staff who participate in walkouts or using lockouts to coerce labor organizations. Additionally, the act ensures that arbitration awards and mediation cannot diminish these newly established rights for educators and library staff. The bill defines public school employees as both certificated and noncertificated employees.

According to the [Education Commission of the States](#) (as of 2020), at least 36 states explicitly prohibit teacher strikes. Striking by teachers, and public employees in general, is typically prohibited to prevent disruption to essential services and, in the education field specifically, to ensure continuity in the operation of schools.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – Delegate Terrasa.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

<b>Labor and Employment - Paid Leave - Attendance at School Functions</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1524</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate J. Long	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> OPPOSE	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Requiring employers that employ 15 or more individuals or are governmental units to provide full-time and part-time employees who are parents at least 20 hours of paid leave each year to attend school functions at the public or nonpublic elementary or secondary school at which the employee's child is enrolled.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB1524 proposes a new mandate requiring employers in Maryland to provide paid leave for parents to participate in their children's educational activities. If enacted, businesses with 15 or more employees and all governmental agencies must grant parents up to 20 hours of paid time off annually for school functions. The legislation limits this benefit to two hours per month and requires employees to provide documentation of the event within 48 hours. Employers are prohibited from forcing staff to use existing vacation or sick time to cover these specific absences. Furthermore, the bill establishes that the Commissioner of Labor and Industry has the authority to investigate violations and enforce compliance with these regulations.

As a school system, HCPSS is acutely aware of the valuable impact parental participation in the educational system can have on a student's academic success. The intent of HB1524 is laudable and underscores this fundamental principle. However, such a leave provision should be bargained locally with the school system when determining contractual obligations. Current personal leave gives flexibility in its uses by staff to include the leave described under HB1524. School systems are impacted twice by the bill when having to fill additional staff absences. As a legislative platform, the Board opposes legislation which limits local board flexibility in oversight of school system operations and budgets, and supports making leave decisions through collective bargaining agreements with employee associations locally.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – OPPOSE
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – OPPOSE

<b>Education - Program of Educational Accountability - Alterations (Comprehensive Outcomes and Measures of Progress for Supporting Schools (COMPASS Act))</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1582</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> By Request - Departmental - Education	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> SUPPORT	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Altering the school quality indicators authorized for an educational accountability program in public schools; and prohibiting the use of certain indicators in an educational accountability system.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB1582, introduced at the request of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), proposes changes to the star rating school accountability system that produces [Maryland's annual school report cards](#). The legislation mandates that educational accountability must rely on at least three school quality indicators, specifically requiring the use of school climate surveys that include feedback from educators. It introduces new metrics for school staffing and curriculum completion while adjusting the mathematical weighting of

academic versus non-academic factors in a school's total score. The bill raises the maximum weight for academic indicators to 70 percent, indicates no academic indicator of proficiency may be weighted more than 20 percent of the composite score, and strictly prohibits using teacher evaluations or letter grades to rank institutions. The act ensures transparency by requiring that individual components of a school's composite score be reported separately rather than as a single, vague figure.

HCPSS Curriculum and Academic staff support HB1582, along with many advocates such as the Maryland State Education Association (MSEA). The bill is [intended to build in flexibility to the educational accountability system](#) that will allow the State to develop a more accurate and actionable system that is easily understood by stakeholders. The proposed amendments will allow for simplification of the accountability system while supporting meaningful comparisons of school performance.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – SUPPORT
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – SUPPORT

<b>Public School System Contracts - Prohibited Provisions</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HB1604</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b> <a href="#">SB0646</a>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Delegate Kerr	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Senator King
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> SUPPORT	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Prohibiting certain provisions from being included in public school system contracts; specifying that certain provisions are void if included in a public school system contract; specifying the applicable law and interpretation of public school system contracts; and applying the Act prospectively.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HB1604/SB0646 establishes a framework to protect local school systems by banning specific harmful clauses from all public school system contracts. The legislation prohibits terms that would force schools into binding arbitration, limit a contractor's financial liability, or mandate automatic renewals that tie up future funding. It also prevents vendors from unilaterally changing terms or enforcing confidential conditions unknown to the school system at the time of signing. Any contract containing these forbidden elements will be treated as if those sections do not exist, ensuring the remainder of the agreement stays valid. This act is designed to apply only to new agreements or extensions signed after its effective date in July 2026.

This bill was brought forward by the Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) and the in-house counsels for local school systems. It is modeled on legislation and various Attorney General opinions already in place for state agencies, and was implemented two years ago for the University System of Maryland who have found it valuable. The goal is to simplify contract negotiations by prohibiting certain provisions that often consume time and resources to negotiate, delaying implementation in the process.

In particular, HB1604 provides several key protections for public school budgets by prohibiting specific financial and contractual obligations in any agreement entered into by a public school system:

- **Prohibition on Unappropriated Spending:** A contract may not include any provision that creates a deficiency, incurs a liability, or spends money in excess of the appropriation. It also prohibits binding a public school system to pay any amount unless funds have specifically been appropriated for that purpose.

- Indemnification Restrictions: Public school systems are prohibited from agreeing to indemnify, defend, or hold harmless another person unless there is an existing appropriation of funds to cover that specific purpose.
- Protection Against Future Funding Obligations: The bill bars provisions that require the automatic renewal of a contract if that renewal would obligate the school system to allocate funding in future fiscal years.
- Prevention of Unilateral or Unknown Costs: Contracts cannot include terms that are unknown at the time of signing or terms that may be unilaterally changed by the other party, which prevents unexpected financial hits to the budget.
- Recovery of Replacement Costs: To ensure fiscal responsibility when a contractor fails to perform, the bill prohibits provisions that would limit a school system's ability to recover the difference in cost for a replacement contractor to finish the work.
- Liability Protections: Contracts may not limit the liability of another party for direct losses to the school system caused by negligence, intentional misconduct, fraud, or recklessness.

If any of these prohibited provisions are included in a contract, the bill specifies that the provision is void ab initio (void from the beginning), and the rest of the contract remains enforceable as if the prohibited provision did not exist. This ensures that even if a school system signs a contract with these terms, the budget remains protected under state law.

MABE intends to add an amendment that would clarify these provisions do not impact contracts with bargaining units when the sponsor introduces the bill.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – SUPPORT
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – SUPPORT

<b>Income Tax - Credit for Student Loan Debt of Educators Working in Public Schools</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">SB0882</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Senator Kramer	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<a href="#">Link to Bill Details</a>	Link to Bill Details
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> SUPPORT	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** Authorizing a credit against the State income tax for certain individuals who are employed full-time in a public primary or secondary school in the State and have outstanding student loan debt; and applying the Act to taxable years beginning after December 31, 2025.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** SB0882 proposes a new Maryland income tax credit specifically designed for full-time educators working in public primary or secondary schools. To qualify, teachers must have outstanding student loan debt and participate in the state’s established career ladder program. The legislation authorizes the Maryland Higher Education Commission to award up to \$5 million in tax credits annually on a first-come, first-served basis, with a significant portion reserved for local graduates. Recipients must use the financial relief to repay their student loans and remain employed in a local school system to maintain eligibility over a five-year period.

Ultimately, this bill seeks to improve the recruitment and retention of teachers by easing the financial burden of their professional education. As a legislative platform, the Board supports recruitment and retention measures that incentivize school system employees to live locally in Maryland and Howard County and commit to longevity in the system. This has included offering housing incentives, rental assistance, tax credits, transportation, and other basic needs for school system employees.

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – None.
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – SUPPORT
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – SUPPORT

**Proposed Local Bills for Board Position**

<b>Howard County – Office of the Inspector General – Access to Public Records</b>	
<b>Bill Number:</b> <a href="#">HoCo 15-26</a>	<b>Cross File Number:</b>
<b>Primary Sponsor:</b> Howard County Delegation	<b>Primary Sponsor:</b>
<b>Bill Details:</b> <a href="https://www.howardcountymd.gov/state-delegation/2026-proposed-local-legislation-and-legislative-bond-initiatives">https://www.howardcountymd.gov/state-delegation/2026-proposed-local-legislation-and-legislative-bond-initiatives</a>	<b>Bill Details:</b>
<b>Position Recommendation:</b> <i>For Board Discussion</i>	

**Maryland General Assembly Summary:** For the purpose of providing that the Office of the Inspector General for Howard County shall have access to and inspect certain public records under certain circumstances; prohibiting a custodian from denying the Office of the Inspector General for Howard County access to a public record under certain circumstances; providing that redisclosure of certain information is subject to certain restrictions; and generally relating to access to public records by the Office of the Inspector General for Howard County.

**HCPSS Staff Analysis:** HoCo 15-26 was introduced by the Delegation at the request of the newly appointed Howard County Inspector General to expand investigative powers. Under the Maryland Public Information Act, the bill requires government custodians to permit the office to review public records when such access is required for official audits. The bill indicates these audits may target the local government, specific county agencies, or the public school system.

The [Howard County Office of the Inspector General](#) was established following the passage of County Council Bill 61-2024. Under Howard County Code Sec. 22.1203, the duties and abilities of the Inspector General is described as “evaluate, investigate, inspect, and monitor the activities and records of the County Government, external entities, and individuals receiving County funds for, but not limited to, contracts, procurements, grants, agreements, and other financial or programmatic arrangements undertaken by or on behalf of the County Government; or any other function, activity, policy, procedure, process, or operation conducted by County Government, external entities, or individuals receiving County funds or benefits.”

**Additional Information:**

- Prior Introduction – None.
- Local Howard County Delegation Sponsors – House Delegation
- Position Recommended by HCPSS Staff – *For Committee Discussion*
- Position Recommended by Legislative Committee – *For Board Discussion*