



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 14 - County Boards of Education – Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation – Information Collection and Reporting Requirements

Position: Favorable

By: Linda T. Kohn, President

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The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) is a nonpartisan organization that supports policies that provide an equitable, quality education for all children. LWVMD supports *HB 14 – County Boards of Education – Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation*, which amends current law to promote greater data transparency and accessibility around incidents of bullying, harassment, and intimidation.

Bullying behaviors are a troubling and widespread issue that negatively affects children and adolescents. A meta-analysis found that 35% of adolescents were involved in bullying, either as bullies, victims, or as both bullies and victims.¹ Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) collects data on bullying, but it is one of ten behaviors reported as attacks/threats/fighting, and only then if a student is suspended or expelled.² Thus, Maryland families and educators lack a good understanding of how wide-spread these behaviors are, something this bill addresses.

Bullying negatively impacts children’s mental health (anxiety, depression, low-self-esteem, suicidal thoughts), physical health (headaches, sleep/eating disorders), academic performance (poor grades, dropout risk, avoiding school), and social skills (isolation, relationships). These negative impacts have long-term impacts, extending into adulthood.

Because of the short and long-term negative impact of bullying on the educational experiences of students, data should be transparent, reasonably detailed and accessible to educators, parents, and the public. This will help both families and educators better address the issue. By ensuring that bullying, harassment, and intimidation data is in accessible and transparent, ***House Bill 14 encourages accountability for bullying behaviors and will facilitate dialogue about how to address these issues.***

LWVMD urges a favorable report on HB14.

¹Modecki, K. L., et al. (2014). Bullying prevalence across contexts: A meta-analysis measuring cyber and traditional bullying. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 55* (5). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2014.06.007>

² Maryland State Department of Education. (October 2025). *Suspensions by school and major offense category: In-school and out-of-school suspensions and expulsions.* <https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/documents/dcaa/sdp/20242025student/2025-student-suspensions-by-school-combined-a.pdf>