



*ACS supports Howard County nonprofits in the achievement of their missions
because strong nonprofits improve the quality of life for all.*

Ho. Co. 23-20 - Howard County – Public Schools – Reporting of School Data

Position: Support

January 23, 2020

As Executive Director of the Association of Community Services (ACS), it is my privilege to offer testimony on behalf of our over 160 nonprofit member organizations and community advocates who work diligently on behalf of vulnerable populations in our community. I am offering this letter in support of Ho.Co. 23-20, which requires public schools in Howard County to report specified data to the Howard County Board of Education annually and requires the Board to submit a report to the State Board of Education, Howard County Executive, Howard County Council, and the Howard County Delegation to the MD General Assembly.

Requiring the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) to report certain disaggregated student and teacher data annually will certainly benefit the public good. It is currently difficult for parents, students, official partners of Howard County Public Schools and other community stakeholders to access and synthesize the results and to make changes to our programming and services. This legislation would provide greater transparency and accountability to improve our academic institutions and the delivery of educational and human services to Howard County students.

The ACS is committed to advancing racial equity in Howard County and thinks that this bill better positions Howard County Public Schools to address existing inequities strategically and intentionally. This data will help expose disparities, allow Howard County Public Schools to reassess existing practices and policies, and re-evaluate fiscal and budgeting decisions. Providing greater accessibility to these data will also better position human service providers to tailor services provided to Howard County students and their families.

Though we support the bill overall, we also want to raise four concerns for you to consider:

1. Protection of student privacy is essential. We assume that the disaggregated data reports made available will be fully compliant with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and will protect individual student/family privacy.
2. Data collection and reporting should not require excessive additional funding. We recognize that most, if not all, of the data anticipated under this bill is already collected by HCPSS and reported to some state or national authority. If that should change, however, we would be concerned about the fiscal impact on the HCPSS budget.
3. Public reports of school-level bullying data might suppress future reporting of bullying events. HCPSS and the state delegation should work to mitigate any unintentional impacts of this type of school-level data reporting.



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4. Ideally, the HCPSS should already make existing disaggregated data available to Howard County taxpayers and elected leaders. We would ask that HCPSS and the state delegation discuss the potential of compiling these reports and making them available to taxpayers and elected officials without the need for legislation.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer support for this bill and hope that it receives a favorable vote by the delegation.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Driessen
Executive Director