

Maryland Education Coalition

The Maryland Education Coalition is dedicated to raising the academic achievement of students in Maryland public schools by promoting adequate funding and systemic accountability for improving results.

Testimony Before the Judiciary Committee In Opposition to:

House Bill 395 - Handguns – Permit Qualifications and Carrying on School Property – School Guardians

House Bill 397 - Criminal Law – Carrying Weapons on School Property – Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act

House Bill 436 - Handguns – School Employees – Handgun Permits and Carrying Weapons on School Property

Presented by Charlie Cooper, March 5, 2013

The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) fights for adequate, equitable funding and systemic accountability because every child deserves a quality education and because achievement gaps must be closed. We also support increased funding to improve the public school buildings where our children learn, concentrating on areas of greatest need. Every child and school employee deserves a school building that promotes and protects academic achievement and occupant health in a safe and orderly environment, but unacceptable disparities persist.

House Bill 395 allows school superintendents to designate school guardians. If the guardian has a handgun permit, he or she may carry the gun on school property. There is no training requirement.

House Bill 397 allows any person who has permission to carry a deadly weapon or who may carry a concealed weapon pursuant to federal law to have the weapon on school property. There is no training requirement.

Under House Bill 436 a county board may authorize school employees to carry a handgun on school property. The handgun must be secured on the employee's body. Again, there is no training requirement.

In light of several highly publicized school shootings recently, school safety is on nearly everyone's mind, and there are many people – citizens and experts alike – who are advocating solutions. We believe that a dispassionate and multi-disciplinary examination of the problem in all its various forms is wise – one truly searching for all the forms of vulnerability rather than just those that make headlines. We support the approach taken in House Bill 453 to establish a Center for School Safety. That bill will be heard by the Ways and Means Committee tomorrow.

Without the kind of research-based approach embodied in HB 453, and without sober consideration by a wide range of experts in various fields related to school safety, MEC opposes any attempt to expand the number or type of weapons in schools. Therefore, we ask that you give all these bills unfavorable reports.

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