

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.

Statement to the Ways and Means Committee In Support of House Bill 453 – Education - Maryland Center for School Safety

Board of Directors:

David Beard, Co-Chair
Rick Tyler, Co-Chair
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American Association of University
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Advocates for Children and Youth
(ACY)
American Civil Liberties Union of
Maryland (ACLU-MD)
Maryland Disability Law Center
(MDLW)
Maryland PTA (MD-PTA)

Laura Carr
Carl Stokes
Sharon Rubinstein
Pamela Wallentiny

March 6, 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. Part of our mission states that we are, “.... dedicated to raising the academic achievement and well-being of students in Maryland public schools.”

The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) supports House Bill 453 – Maryland Center for School Safety. This bill would establish the Maryland Center for School Safety as an independent unit of State government.

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 an on-going 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.

The Center with its Board of Governors specified in the bill would create a centralized agency to address the numerous, complex issues involved in a wide range of school safety concerns. This may include not just the physical safety of the students, staff and visitors of our many schools, but the social environment, mental health, and other interrelated issues that may impact the safety and welfare within and around our schools.

MEC also urges the bill sponsors and the Governor to seriously consider appointing as one of the public members at least one representative from Maryland PTA or our other MEC organizations who has knowledge and expertise on such matters. Our membership organizations are among the largest and most active child advocacy organizations in the state representing over 200,000 members within over 950 Maryland Schools Statewide. They bring a wide range of resources that may be useful to the Maryland Center for School Safety governing body and the constituents it would be assigned to support.

The Governor has set aside \$25,000,000 in the capital budget for school safety, including training. We think that \$3,000,000 for the Center as proposed in HB 453 would be among the wisest investments we could make in school safety and ask for your favorable report.

8 Market Place, 5th Floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Phone: 410-547-9200
Fax: 410-547-8690