The Anne Arundel County Board of Education OPPOSES House Bill 978 - Education - Accountability - Consolidated State Plan and Support and Improvement Plans (Protect Our Schools Act of 2017). This bill requires that the State’s consolidated state plan to improve student outcomes, which the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must submit to the U.S. Department of Education under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), comply with the requirements detailed in the bill. The bill specifies parameters for school quality indicators, comprehensive support and improvement plans, and targeted support and improvement plans, and prohibits specified interventions.

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) is concerned that House Bill 978 is in conflict with ESSA and Maryland’s Consolidated State Plan. ESSA provides a long-term, stable federal policy that gives states additional flexibility and encourages states, local school systems, and schools to innovate while at the same time holding them accountable for results. To accomplish these goals, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has identified five overarching components and corresponding elements that cut across all of the included programs and that must be addressed. Additionally, there is an MSDE-sponsored ESSA workgroup which has been discussing a variety of indicators to provide for school quality and school success indicators to measure opportunity and climate. This workgroup has been meeting for the past 18 months with many education advocacy groups participating, including school system representatives.

House Bill 978 would include additional school quality indicators as determined by the General Assembly rather than MSDE as regulated and approved by ESSA. AACPS has several concerns with the proposed quality indicators proposed in the bill. Trying to measure school quality outside of test scores is a novel idea, however, ACCPS does not believe that this bill accomplishes its intention to address school quality or improvement. As stated in the fiscal note, there is a potential loss of federal revenues if some provisions of the bill put the State out of compliance with ESSA. In fact, nearly $249 million in federal Title I grants and school improvement grants may be jeopardized.

Accordingly, the Anne Arundel County Board of Education respectfully requests an UNFAVORABLE committee report on House Bill 978.