The Board of Education of Anne Arundel County opposes HB996 Homeschool Students in Maryland - Extracurricular Activities. This bill would authorize a public school in the State to allow a home-schooled student who is eligible to attend the public school to participate in extracurricular activities sponsored by the school to the same extent that a student who is enrolled in the public school may participate. A public school would be required to give placement priority to a student enrolled in the school if there are a limited number of spaces available for students in a given extracurricular activity.

Maryland public schools are committed to and required to serve all of the State’s school-aged children who are not enrolled in other educational institutions or programs, regardless of religious preferences, ability to pay tuition, or special needs. Public schools provide their students with a wide variety of courses and programs aimed at educating and preparing them for graduation, college and career readiness, and full participation in their nation, State, and local communities. While the Board appreciates that HB996 is enabling and not a mandate, there are still concerns with the bill. The Board believes that the responsibility of local school systems does not and should not extend to home-schooled students.

The Board has concerns regarding the increased administrative burdens, costs, and liabilities that could arise if students participating in home instruction allowed to participate in public school extracurricular activities. Allowing a home-schooled student to participate with enrolled students in extracurricular activities would introduce serious challenges regarding school system liability and the extension of limited staff resources.

Accordingly, the Board of Education of Anne Arundel County respectfully requests an UNFAVORABLE committee report on HB996.