The Anne Arundel County Board of Education OPPOSES House Bill 365. This Bill requires that by September 1, 2016, the State Board of Education must update the model policy on bullying, harassment, and intimidation to include a statement prohibiting an electronic communication of a photograph, an audio recording, or a video recording of an act of bullying, harassment, or intimidation. It must also include a statement prohibiting an electronic communication that is transmitted for the purpose of embarrassment and is a photograph, an audio recording, or a video recording of conduct that occurred on school property, at a school activity or event, or on a school bus. A statement prohibiting reprisal or retaliation against an individual who reports an electronic communication of bullying, harassment, intimidation or embarrassment must be included along with the standard consequences and remedial actions for persons found to have transmitted prohibited electronic communications as described above and for those found to have made false accusations of the aforementioned prohibited electronic communications. The State Board shall also provide model procedures for reporting a prohibited electronic communication and for the investigation of a prohibited electronic communication. The Bill requires that by January 1, 2017, each county board shall update its policy based on the state board's updated model policy and submit it to the State Superintendent. This Bill adds that a school employee who reports an electronic communication in accordance with the county board's policy is not civilly liable for any act or omission in reporting or failing to report an electronic communication under this section.

The Maryland State Department of Education has rightfully provided a model bullying, harassment and intimidation policy. Local school systems have followed the model policy and adopted their own policies and regulations on this topic to meet the needs of their communities and their school systems. The State Board of Education, in collaboration with local boards of education, is the appropriate body to make education policy decisions such as this one. We support local control of educational policy matter such as this one.

Accordingly, the Anne Arundel County Board of Education urges the House Ways and Means Committee to issue an UNFAVORABLE Report on House Bill 365.