

Good evening, my name is Marybeth Steil and am an attorney and company owner here in Howard County. I am a member of the HoCo Families for Education Improvement (referred to here as "FEI") . My testimony today is on behalf of FEI.

FEI welcomes the opportunity to testify on the adoption of Policy 1080 Educational Equity. We believe strongly in the steps taken by the Maryland State Board of Education in its implementation of the COMAR regulations to "provide every student equitable access to the educational rigor, resources, and supports that are designed to maximize the student's academic success and social/emotional well-being."

FEI was established last year to zealously advocate for strong schools for ALL Howard County students. We are acutely aware that there are students and schools within our HCPSS system that are not having their resource needs met. However, we believe Policy 1080 does not go far enough to demand metrics and accountability in resource allocation across Howard County schools.

We have provided a draft markup of Policy 1080 for the Board's review. We believe Policy 1080 should be amended and improved to provide stronger supports to vulnerable student populations: particularly girls in STEM classes and exceptional students from historically underrepresented groups.

HCPSS needs to emphasize inclusion and the removal of barriers of participation for all students, so that each Howard County school student can reach his or her full potential.

We know that women and girls are particularly underrepresented in STEM fields -- the fastest growing sectors of our economy. We must continue to encourage girls to pursue learning in fields like animal science, biology, chemistry, math, engineering, and computer science. We must invest more time and resources into education in digital tools and technology for all Howard County students, but especially girls. Unfortunately, too many girls may start in these classes, but lose interest by graduation and do not continue them in college or graduate school. Policy 1080 simply does not go far enough to demand active investment of HCPSS resources and efforts to support and encourage our girls to take vigorous STEM classes, continue in them, and prepare for STEM careers.

As currently drafted, Policy 1080 also does not go far enough to identify exceptional, high achieving students from the student populations that have been historically underrepresented. Especially under our current circumstances, it is increasingly clear that to compete in the world economy, Howard County should be taking proactive steps to identify and recruit talented students into challenging classes. Our investments in talent identification and accelerated classwork, as well as holistic student support, should be growing. HCPSS also needs to teach the tools necessary for all of our growing students to successfully navigate

priorities and manage stress. Once prioritized, FEI is confident that Howard County schools can successfully identify and nurture talented students from underrepresented student population and equip them with the tools necessary to excel.

Please consider strengthening Policy 1080.