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## **Testimony before the Judicial Proceedings Committee**

### **In SUPPORT of**

### **Senate Bill 848- Nonpublic Elementary and Secondary Schools- Discrimination- Prohibition**

**Shamoyia Gardiner, Education Policy Senior Associate, Advocates for Children and Youth  
February 14, 2019**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 848- Nonpublic Elementary and Secondary School- Discrimination- Prohibition. Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) supports this bill.

The Second Lady of the United States set off a resurgence in the national conversation about discrimination in nonpublic schools when she began working at a private school in Virginia with a policy that effectively bans the enrollment of LGBTQ-identified students. Prior to that, 6th grader Faith Fennidy, a young Black girl in Louisiana, was turned away from her private school for her hairstyle--braided hair extensions. Here in Maryland, Maddi Runkles was prohibited from participating in her private high school's graduation ceremony because she was pregnant.

All students, regardless of their race, religion, gender identity, parenting status, nationality, sexual orientation, disability status, English proficiency, or any of many other demographic categories, deserve access to high-quality education. All schools, public and nonpublic alike, must provide that access.

Priorities around the expansion of nonpublic schools in Maryland have manifested in the form of a \$2.6 million allocation for charter school construction projects and the shifting \$1.2 million from the Health School Facility Fund to charter schools this year.

Further, the BOOST (Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today) program which provides scholarships for students to attend private schools, was promised increased funding in the state budget, despite the program not fully utilizing all the funds allocated to it in the previous fiscal year.

In light of these recent moves to increase state funding for nonpublic schools, **it is imperative that the General Assembly move to preemptively address protections for all Maryland students in nonpublic schools.**



SB 848 simply serves to expand the protections currently offered to employees of nonpublic elementary and secondary schools to the students who attend those schools. This bill does not prevent single-gender or religiously-identified nonpublic schools from carrying out their specific, stated missions for the demographic populations they intend to reach. With that clarity in mind, **ACY urges a favorable report on this bill.**

