

Recognizing Safe School Zones

WHEREAS, The Board of Education of Howard County (Board) and Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) believe that an environment of mutual respect and civil conduct between and among students, school system employees, parents, volunteers, and the general public is critical to the achievement of students and staff;

WHEREAS, the Board and HCPSS are committed to maintaining a culture that recognizes the worth and dignity of the individual in support of academic achievement and social development;

WHEREAS, the Board and HCPSS welcomes and supports all students and are committed to providing a safe, engaging supportive school climate in which individuals are valued;

WHEREAS, the Board and HCPSS are committed to protecting the safety of students and enhancing their emotional well-being;

WHEREAS, foreign born students may face unique circumstances that might impact their safety and learning environment unless appropriate safeguarding actions are taken;

WHEREAS, The United States Supreme Court held in *Plyler v. Doe (1982)* that a public school district may not deny students access to education based on their immigration status, citing the harm it would inflict on the student and society itself, and their equal protection rights under the Fourteenth Amendment; and

WHEREAS, THE United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) issued a policy directive on October 24, 2011, declaring schools to be “sensitive locations” where immigration enforcement actions may not occur except in exigent or extreme circumstances,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board declares every HCPSS site to be a safe zone for its students and their families, where school staff strive to provide every student with a nurturing and supportive environment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board embraces the I.C.E. 2011 directive that schools are sensitive locations where immigration enforcement action should not occur and urges in the strongest terms possible that the federal government honor that directive;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that school staff should take proactive action to support students and families that might be affected by I.C.E. enforcement action by providing information, resources, counseling, and other school supports;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that HCPSS staff should not take any action that may discourage the participation, or lead to the exclusion, of students based on immigration status;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that HCPSS staff not require students or their families to provide any information about their immigration status (except where special rules apply to students in foreign exchange programs);

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in its continued commitment to the protection of student privacy, HCPSS shall review its record-keeping policies and practices to ensure that no data is being collected with respect to students’ immigration status;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that HCPSS will not tolerate any harassment, bullying, or discrimination on account of immigration status or for any other reason;

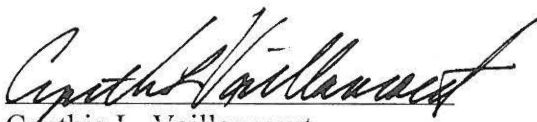
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board encourages the Superintendent to increase and enhance partnerships with community-based organizations and legal services organizations who provide resources for families, including families with questions about immigration laws and deportation;

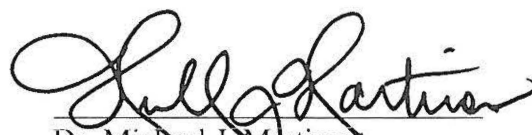
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board is committed to providing professional learning opportunities to HCPSS staff through the Office of Leadership Development that:

- 1) Enhance staff interaction with foreign born students and families and ensure that inquiries, requests for documentation, and the handling of student information comply with law;
- 2) Provide guidance on responding to requests by federal immigration agents; and
- 3) Assist foreign born students and their families in accessing resources and services offered by the school system and other agencies.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that HCPSS shall post this Resolution at every school site and distribute it to staff, students, and families using usual means of communication;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Superintendent develop a new, comprehensive policy consistent with this Resolution that recognizes HCPSS schools as “safe zones” that lawfully safeguard the privacy, safety, educational climate, and emotional health of our foreign born students.


Cynthia L. Vaillancourt
Chairman, Board of Education


Dr. Michael J. Martirano
Interim Superintendent of Schools

September 7, 2017