Maryland PTA is the state’s oldest and largest child advocacy organization that serves as a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. We represent thousands of volunteer members in 900 public schools and we are comprised of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. For nearly 104 years, our mission has been to make every child’s potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

Maryland PTA submits this letter in support of House Bill 1137, Task Force to Study the Home and Hospital Teaching Program for Students. This bill establishes a Task Force to Study the Home and Hospital Teaching Program for Students and its function would be to:

1) Assess whether students receiving instructional services through the program are provided with adequate support and instructional time to successfully transition back to a classroom setting;
2) Analyze whether local school systems have sufficient staffing to coordinate instructional services for the average number of students in the program in a school system;
3) Study whether transition plans for students returning to the classroom should be implemented, and if so, whether it would be viable for school counselors to lead and develop the transition plans for the students;
4) Assess whether any transition plans should be reviewed or evaluated by a licensed medical professional before being implemented by the local school system; and
5) Make recommendations regarding the findings of the Task Force.

The Home and Hospital Teaching Program (HHTP) is regulated in The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.03.05.01. It was established to provide instructional services to public school students who are unable to participate in their school of enrollment due to a physical or emotional condition such as kidney failure, cancer, asthma, cystic fibrosis, sickle cell anemia, depression, and bipolar disorder. Maryland PTA believes that no one educational program is best for all children and that schools and parents should work together to address the different ways in which children learn. The Association believes that, through this Task Force, a comprehensive evaluation of the HHTP can be evaluated for effectiveness. It is important for stakeholders to evaluate if this program appropriately conducts the educational commitment set forth to maximize students’ ability to learn and transition back into the regular classroom environment.

Maryland PTA supports the establishment of this Task Force because the Association recognizes the special needs of underserved populations. Because the HHTP requires a delivery of instructional services for a student whose physical or emotional condition requires the student to be absent from school on an intermittent basis, we believe that it deserves adequate attention in assessing how it encourages a creative integration of education, a practice the Association supports in order to reach vulnerable families. The Association wholeheartedly recommends the establishment of this Task Force and encourages a favorable report for House Bill 1137.

Testimony is presented on the behalf of

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