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## Md. House panel delays vote on gay-marriage bill

By TOM LoBIANCO

The Associated Press

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ANNAPOLIS

At least one Maryland lawmaker said she held up a bill Tuesday to legalize gay marriage in order to gain support for her own legislation, including funding for Baltimore schools.

Maryland's House Judiciary Committee delayed a critical vote after two gay marriage supporters didn't show up.

Delegate Jill Carter, D-Baltimore, said she skipped the vote because she wants \$15 million in funding restored Baltimore City schools and passage of her bill to more evenly divide child custody for divorced parents.

"It's one thing to have a rally, it's another thing to use the power of your office," she said.

Delegate Tiffany Alston, D-Prince George's, also missed the planned vote, leaving supporters at least two votes shy of the 12 they need to advance the bill. Telephone messages left at Alston's office were not immediately returned.

After waiting 15 minutes — and ignoring heckles from the committee's Republican members — House Judiciary Committee Chairman Joseph Vallario said he was delaying the vote until later Tuesday.

The Maryland Senate approved same-sex marriage last week and Gov. Martin O'Malley has said he would sign the bill into law if it reaches his desk.

Delegate Curt Anderson, D-Baltimore, said a coalition of Baltimore and Prince George's delegates

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had already been working House Speaker Michael Busch to restore that schools funding.

Busch declined to talk about Carter's request, and his spokeswoman said he did not know about them.

Although supporters have struggled to lock-in the 71 votes they need to pass the House, the drama posed a new challenge.

As bill supporters, including Delegate Luiz Simmons, circled the room and jetted in and out of the adjacent offices with an aide to Busch, Republicans heckled.

"Lou, look under the desk!" said Delegate Michael Smigiel, R-Cecil, an opponent of gay marriage.

If supporters lose a committee vote, they can push to have the bill voted on by the full House anyway. But Simmons said he would oppose that tactic, even if it kills the measure.

"Even though I support same-sex marriage, I would be very very concerned about violating the process and bringing forward a bill without 12 votes," he said. "I mean, either we have them, or we don't."