

MARYLAND COALITION TO REFORM SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

SUPPORT THE USE OF RESTORATIVE APPROACHES IN SCHOOLS

A comprehensive package of bills before the General Assembly supports the implementation of restorative approaches in schools. These bills, based directly on the December 2018 recommendations of the Maryland School to Prison Pipeline Commission, endeavor to keep students in school rather than pushing them out through ineffective, exclusionary discipline practices. The Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline supports these measures which have been shown to improve overall school climate and student behavior in a manner that is equitable and helps students stay on track to graduate.

Why should you support restorative approaches?

- Schools and classrooms that have comprehensively and consistently implemented restorative approaches have seen improvements in school climate and student behavior.
 - (See e.g., Open Society Institute – Baltimore, Baltimore Restorative Practices Report (2018), noting that Baltimore City Schools that have incorporated restorative approaches “are experiencing reductions in suspensions and chronic absence, greater teacher job satisfaction, improved academic outcomes, and often dramatic enrollment increases.”).
- Suspension and expulsion, by contrast, have been shown not to improve behavior, resolve conflict, or improve school climate, and to increase the risk that excluded students drop out or become involved with the justice system. Schools that have reduced reliance on these exclusionary responses have seen improvements in their climate and student achievement.
 - (See e.g., Rebecca Hinze-Pifer & Lauren Sartain (2018) Rethinking Universal Suspension for Severe Student Behavior, Peabody Journal of Education, 93:2, 228-243, finding that reductions in the use of suspensions in Chicago public schools, even for severe infractions, were not associated with declines in student safety; in fact, some students felt safer, and overall test scores and attendance improved).
- The recommendation to use restorative approaches, and decrease reliance on exclusionary discipline, comes directly from the recommendations of the School to Prison Pipeline Commission, an expert group comprised of educators, parent representatives, conflict resolution practitioners, and other relevant stakeholders.
- None of these bills prevent exclusion in the event of imminent threat of serious harm.

Please support:

- **HB 725/SB 766** – requires local school systems to develop and implement plans to facilitate and promote the use of restorative approaches.
- **HB 1229** – creates a State fund to support local school systems’ use of restorative approaches
- **HB 1208** – creates a State level board to oversee and monitor the implementation of restorative approaches plans at the local educational agency level
- **HB 439** – prohibits school resource officers and security from being involved in routine discipline matters
- **HB 704** – allows the Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center to analyze data on the long-term impact of exclusionary discipline and juvenile justice involvement
- **HB 950** – requires the State to make data about high-suspending schools and schools that disproportionately suspend students of color and students with disabilities more accessible to the public.

What are restorative approaches?

Different practices may be employed depending on the specific situation, but examples of restorative approaches include: conflict resolution, mediation, peer mediation, circle processes, social emotional learning, positive behavioral interventions and supports, and/or rehabilitation.

The Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline is a group of advocates, educators, attorneys, community members, and others who are committed to ensuring that the discipline of students in Maryland Schools is fair, equitable, appropriate, and designed to keep kids in school and on track to graduate.

For more information, please contact Monisha Cherayil, Legislative Committee Chairperson for the Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline, at cherayilm@publicjustice.org