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Ways and Means Committee
Education Subcommittee
Election Law Subcommittee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**In Support of HB0202
Restorative Schools Fund and Grants - Establishment**

Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on a bill that will make a difference for students across our state. You might remember it from last year, when it passed the House on Third Reader by a vote of 138-1 only to die in the Senate. You may recall that it was part of a package of bills introduced by Delegates Washington, Charkoudian and me that grew out of the excellent 2018 report by the *Maryland Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices*.

The most recent available data shows that over 12,000 students across Maryland are suspended from school each year. That means an average of 68 students are suspended every day. According to this report, students subject to exclusionary discipline like suspension risk a “downward spiral of academic failure, disengagement from school, and antisocial behaviors” – all of which can increase involvement with the criminal-justice system.

The report also found that the Maryland State Department of Education and many school districts have started to implement restorative strategies and promote inclusive and equitable learning environments, but substantial work remains in order to align disciplinary practices in our schools with Maryland’s goal of providing a world-class education to all students.

This bill creates that alignment by creating a fund to provide grants to local school districts and individual schools to support the training, implementation, and evaluation of restorative approaches in ways that build positive learning communities. Funded activities include:

- Gathering and analyzing school discipline data and conducting root cause analysis
- Conducting annual, system-wide training on restorative approaches for all school personnel who interact with children, including teachers, administrators, school resource officers, cafeteria workers, office staff, aides and volunteers
- Providing all of these same school personnel with implicit bias training
- Establishing teacher and administrative leadership tracks that promote competency in restorative approaches.

These activities complement the restorative practice-related professional development option in the Teacher Collaborative Grant Program established by the *Blueprint for Maryland’s Future*, and is part of the wrap-around services expanded by the law.

Without restorative practices in place, our students will not have the proper tools needed to learn how to resolve conflict in society. With restorative practices, they are less likely to be suspended, and more likely to graduate. Restorative practices change the trajectory of our children's lives. The lessons our students learn go beyond the classroom and prepare our youth for the future they deserve. I respectfully request you to issue a favorable report on this bill. Thank you.