

EQUITY FOR ALL KIDS



To: Chair Kaiser and members of the Ways and Means Committee
From: Shamoyia Gardiner, Education Policy Director
Re: House Bill 1468: Education - Student Behavior - Parent Notice and Required Counseling (Parent Accountability Act)
Date: March 4, 2020
Position: Oppose

In loco parentis refers to the legal responsibility of school to operate in the place of a parent for students. While schools have authority over students, it is irresponsible and illogical to attempt to translate that power into the criminalization and financial extortion of students' families. **HB 1468 actively attempts to criminalize parents and families for some undefined standard of "violent and disruptive" student behavior.**

The bill, though race-neutral on its surface, **will have disproportionately negative consequences across racial and socio-economic lines.** Students of color are disproportionately represented in statewide school discipline data, though Black students in particular are suspended and expelled from school at twice the rate they exist in the general population. Most worrisome of all, nearly half of the offenses that students were pushed out of school over are ill-defined (like "disrespect") or entirely subjective.¹

In a state where school-based leaders are predominantly white and not required to undergo any specific anti-bias or culturally relevant pedagogy development training, it is not difficult to understand that subjective standards create space for bias to flourish and harm students of color. **Students identified under HB 1468 would be disproportionately nonwhite.** Further, nonwhite parents tend to be employed in fields that offer low hourly wages and few, if any, benefits or flexibility in scheduling.² HB 1468 is primed to further disturbing disparities in school discipline **while unnecessarily forcing families of color to interact with the justice system and compromising their finances.**

HB 1468 is a dangerous piece of legislation that would jeopardize the economic stability and freedom of families, while potentially traumatizing and actively harming students of color. This bill is even worse than last year's HB 381, which sought to impose fines for student misbehavior on parents and families in Baltimore County, and is arguably *more* dangerous because of its cross-system, intergenerational, financial, and statewide implications. **ACY strongly urges an unfavorable report on this bill.**

¹ Maryland State Department of Education. 2018-2019 Student Suspension Data.

² Center for American Progress. "When a Job is not Enough" December 5, 2018.