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Ways and Means Committee
Room 131, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill: House Bill 84 – Education – Crimes on School Grounds - Application

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral-level psychologists from throughout the state, is writing in **SUPPORT** of **HB 84 – Education – Crimes on School Grounds - Application**.

Psychologists are acutely aware of the relationship between student behavior and student mental health. Many students who exhibit disruptive behavior in school are in fact communicating their mental and emotional distress in the only way they know how. HB 84 would remove school disruption from the short list of criminal offenses that are specific to schools and are typically enforced in schools. It is unconscionable that these students can be arrested and charged with a criminal offense – and that disproportionate numbers of these students are from minority populations and/or have disabilities.

HB 84 will help us to break the “school-to-prison” pipeline which derails the lives of too many Maryland students. Research does suggest that punishment often accelerates the development of more fixed patterns of socially deviant behavior in these students, while treatment offers the opportunity to disrupt this developmental trajectory. Schools need better and more humane, student-centered discipline procedures, integrated with comprehensive systems of emotional and behavioral support for these troubled students

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 84. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact the MPA Executive Director, Stefanie Reeves, MA, CAE at 410-992-4258 or exec@marylandpsychology.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Sincerely,

Linda McGhee
Linda McGhee, PsyD., J.D.
President

R. Patrick Savage, Jr.
R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs