



AFT 340 AFL-CIO
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Testimony Senate Bill 917

Restorative Practices

Senate - March 6, 2024 - Education, Energy and the Environment Committee @ 1 p.m.

Position: Favorable with Amendments

The Baltimore Teachers Union supports with amendments Senate Bill 917, Altering the duties of behavioral health services coordinators and the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports regarding duties related to implementing Restorative Practices Schools throughout the State; requiring the State Department of Education to develop a comprehensive plan to implement requirements for the establishment of Restorative Practices Schools; and requiring the Department to annually report to the General Assembly on the implementation of Restorative Practices Schools beginning December 1, 2026.

The Baltimore Teachers Union represents 8,280 teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, clinicians, librarians, secretaries, community school site specialists, bus transportation aides, and many more school-based and central office support staff. We are 4 out of 5 workers in Baltimore City Public Schools, serving 75,595 students and their families. Our national union, the American Federation of Teachers, represents over 1.7 million educators, healthcare workers, and public employees in the United States and its territories.

The Baltimore Teachers Union believes deeply in the power of restorative practices, however Senate Bill 917 has shortcomings that we hope will be addressed with the following amendments.

- The fiscal note on this bill is inadequate. The RP coach position needs to be an additional, **state funded** position in schools, not a duty that is added to someone else's already full plate, or an unfunded mandate passed on to LEAs.
- For RP to be implemented correctly, there must be a parent and an RP practitioner in the Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports. The directly impacted and the expertise of a professional who has done transformative work in schools must be included.

- Accountability measures should focus on ensuring fidelity to the work and not just accountability around discipline. The measures should be related to how many direct opportunities for RP are conducted (like RP circles) and how many conflicts are resolved, rather than solely data on suspensions. Far too often schools are pressured to just not suspend without embracing the tools that allow for conflict to be an opportunity for learning and repairing harm.

In conclusion, the BTU supports SB 917 with the above amendments. We believe that this legislation will contribute to a more stable and healthy working environment for our members and learning environment for our students.

Thank you for considering our testimony and for your dedication to ensuring the welfare of educators and staff across our state.

It is for these reasons the BTU supports Senate Bill 917 with amendments and urges a favorable report.

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