



Education, Energy, and the Environment
Senate Bill 917: Public Schools- Restorative Practices Schools- Establishment
DATE: March 6, 2024

POSITION: Support with Amendments

The Alliance to Reclaim our Schools (AROS) is a group of parents and educators who deeply understand the need for providing a restorative framework for building school culture and managing conflicts when they arise. Students need adults who understand the needs and stories behind “misbehavior” and who work to create supports and an accountability system that allows students to grow and change.

We know that where Restorative Practices has already been implemented that there has been an uneven approach, due to a lack of funding for designated personnel and a lack of consistent training and coaching. We think this bill could provide the structures needed to allow this work to be successful with some important amendments.

Though we fully support the establishment of Restorative Practices Schools, we propose the following amendments and cautions:

- The fiscal note on this bill is inadequate to support the RP coaches that would be needed for this work to be successful. This **RP coach position needs to be an additional position in schools**, not a duty that is added to someone else’s already full plate.
- We would support **a year of planning and research that would allow the state to figure out best practices for how to best ramp this work up.**
- We hope that part of the year of planning will also be a time to **commit seriously to building the pipeline of RP coaches.** This will be key to fidelity. In the context of school staffing shortages in all areas, this needs to not be left up to chance.
- In order to manage the initiative with fidelity, **we need a parent and an RP practitioner in the Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports.** This work requires a culture shift, and those who are providing oversight, must have an understanding of the role that families play in all education change work, and the expertise of a professional who has done transformative work in schools
- We need **accountability measures that focus on ensuring fidelity to the work and not just accountability around discipline.** We believe the accountability should focus on how many circles are conducted and how many conflicts are resolved, rather than solely on a reduction in suspensions. We know that far too often schools have felt pressure to just not suspend, but without embracing the tools that allow for conflict to be an opportunity for learning and repairing harm.

This work is important. We look forward to doing it right.
The Baltimore City Parents and Educators from AROS