



Ella Ennis, Legislative Chairman
Maryland Federation of Republican Women
PO Box 6040, Annapolis MD 21401
Email: eee437@comcast.net

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chairman
And Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Senate of Maryland
Annapolis, Maryland

Re: **SB 917** – Restorative Practices Schools – Establishment – **UNFAVORABLE**

Dear Chairman Feldman and Committee Members,

Too many Maryland public school students are underperforming in the basics, particular reading and mathematics. Public funds for additional tutors or subject matter specialists would be a much better investment than hiring restorative practices coaches for every school.

SB 917, while well-intentioned, just expands the education bureaucracy. It requires that all public school systems implement Restorative Practices, hire a Restorative Practices Coordinator, and hire a restorative practices coach for each school.

“Restorative Practices” is derived from “Restorative Justice” theory and practice. In 2014, Carolyn Boyes-Watson from Suffolk University defined “restorative justice” as:

...a growing social movement to institutionalize peaceful approaches to harm, problem-solving and violations of legal and human rights. These range from international peacemaking tribunals such as the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission to innovations within the criminal and juvenile justice systems, schools, social services and communities. Rather than privileging the law, professionals and the state, restorative resolutions engage those who are harmed, wrongdoers and their affected communities in search of solutions that promote repair, reconciliation and the rebuilding of relationships. [From Wikipedia]

One technique used in education restorative practices is the “conversation circle” where the student accused of wrongdoing and the teacher or student offended and other students sit facing each other in a circle with a facilitator (teacher or other student) and discuss the offense, one at a time, and offer recommendations for repairing the harm done and getting the offender to accept responsibility for their actions. Sounds good, but this could easily be manipulated to intimidate or bully students of a particular race, sex, gender or ethnicity.

The *Blueprint for the Future* adds new layers of bureaucracy to the educational system. The Fiscal and Policy Note for SB 917 states that it would cost Montgomery County at least \$18 million annually to hire a “restorative practices coach” for all of its 211. It also places new responsibilities on the local Health Department’s behavioral health coordinators, increasing the administrative burden and their costs.

Please give **SB 917** an **UNFAVORABLE** report.

Sincerely,
Ella Ennis, Legislative Chairman