

# **CFH Testimony SB917 Session 2024.pdf**

Uploaded by: Adam Rosenberg

Position: FAV



Date: March 6, 2024

To: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and the Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Reference: Senate Bill 917 - Public Schools - Restorative Practices Schools - Establishment

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members:

On behalf of LifeBridge Health's Center for Hope we thank you for this opportunity to provide information in strong support of establishing a framework for restorative schools in Maryland, Senate Bill 917. Center for Hope annually provides intervention and prevention services for over 7,700 survivors and caregivers impacted by child abuse, domestic violence, community violence, and elder justice. Over 4,300 of our population helped last year were children. At LifeBridge Health, we recognize the devastating impact of violence in our communities, and the growing number of victims of all ages. Violence is a public health issue. We help our communities by partnering with the people in them to break the cycle of violence. At Center for Hope, we partner with community leaders, stand shoulder to shoulder with parents and caregivers, and help provide survivors of violence and crime with support and healing, in order to grow a collective hope.

The proposed Restorative Schools Act creates important support for our students, teachers, and communities in ensuring student success while recognizing the complex set of challenges present in our schools today. One such facet Center for Hope would like to share its expertise and support is around the various conflict resolution elements proposed in restorative schools. Conflict resolution helps model healthy relationships and boundaries, which create important skills to help prevent intimate partner abuse, assault, and human trafficking. Teaching conflict resolution skills, as a part of the restorative school approach, will also improve school safety and promote learning.

Conflict resolution also helps reduce all forms of gun violence (homicide, suicide, shootings) by teaching critical skills to all children. Gun deaths are leading killer of children and youth in Maryland and throughout the United States. With the wide availability of guns for children, conflict is often quickly and poorly "resolved" through gun violence. Efforts such as community violence intervention have helped drive down homicides and shootings through mediating conflict. Reducing the impulse to peacefully resolve a conflict – either interpersonal or even among one's own inner struggles will reduce homicide and suicide.

Center for Hope's hospital violence responders and Safe Streets violence interrupters help victims and families work through emotional responses towards collaborative problem-solving – rather than retaliatory violence. Participants often say they wish they'd had these skills earlier in

life. Proof in this effort through our own local conflict resolution efforts can be seen by the dramatic 28% decrease in gunshot wound admissions in the Sinai Emergency Department from FY22 to FY23.

Research shows that conflict management skills have reduced suspensions, office visits, and fights. (See, Restorative Practices in Baltimore City Schools, Open Society Institute (2020); Middle School Conflict Resolution, Communities in Schools of North Carolina (2015). The U.S. Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022 authorized \$17 million in federal funding for Maryland schools in to implement comprehensive evidence-based violence intervention programs such as restorative practices and conflict management.

We urge a favorable report on establishing restorative practices in Maryland's schools and support Senate Bill 917.

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Rosenberg  
LifeBridge Health, Vice President, Violence Intervention and Prevention  
Executive Director, Center for Hope  
arosenberg@lifebridgedhealth.org  
Phone: 410-469-4654

# **SB917\_Brooks.pdf**

Uploaded by: Benjamin Brooks

Position: FAV

**BENJAMIN BROOKS**  
*Legislative District 10*  
Baltimore County

Education, Energy, and the  
Environment Committee

Energy Subcommittee

Chair, Joint Electric Universal  
Service Program Workgroup



**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

*Annapolis Office*  
James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 303  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3606 · 301-858-3606  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3606  
Benjamin.Brooks@senate.state.md.us

*District Office*  
Windsor Mill Office  
8419 Liberty Road, Suite B  
Windsor Mill, Maryland 21244  
410-496-4037

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB917**  
**Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools – Establishment**

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee  
March 6, 2024

Chair Feldman, Vice-chair Kagan, members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on SB917 Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools – Establishment. This bill aims to adopt “restorative” practices in all Maryland public schools.

A restorative school program is a school-wide effort to create a positive, relationship-focused learning environment which promotes respect, community, responsibility, accountability, and empowerment among students and staff. It is not a mental health, discipline, attendance, human resources, instructional, or curriculum program. Instead, restorative practices are a proactive approach to conflict resolution which have been shown to improve school climate and narrow disparities between students of all backgrounds.

Currently, Maryland public schools are afflicted with a variety of problems from rising truancy to falling graduation rates to conflicts between students and teachers. Improving student well-being and student-teacher relations has been a priority for the State since the Blueprint for Maryland's Future was enacted in 2021. In this legislation, the Blueprint established the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports (MCCCS) to focus on meeting student behavior health needs in a holistic, non-stigmatized, and coordinated manner. The Consortium was tasked with developing best practices for the creation of a positive classroom for all students. Moreover, funds were set aside for student behavioral health services as well as training staff to recognize student behavioral issues. Additionally, schools were also required to appoint mental health services coordinators within each school to provide these services and ensure the competence of trained staff.

SB917 plans to take what was already established and funded within the Blueprint for a Restorative practice program. This is because restorative practices have been proven to improve student outcomes, address teacher retention issues, and uplift school climate in a number of Baltimore schools. A Johns Hopkins analysis of the 15 Baltimore City schools using restorative practices found suspensions were reduced by 44% in the program's first year. After five years of restorative practices, school arrests were reduced by 81% - indicating a reduction

in violent behavior and a major step towards closing the school-to-prison pipeline. A nationwide study by the RAND Corporation corroborated these results, finding that students in restorative schools were suspended less frequently, suspended for shorter durations, less likely to be suspended multiple times, and referred fewer students to alternative schools compared to non-restorative schools. RAND also found that restorative schools narrowed the disparity in suspensions of Black, Latino, low-income, and students with disabilities, who are suspended at more than twice the rate of their peers in non-restorative schools. These findings are indicative of the impact restorative practices have on students' conduct and the learning environment. Restorative schools reduce the likelihood of dysfunctional behavior and in turn, improve students' and teachers' perceptions of school safety and learning.

Restorative practices do not just improve conduct-- they also foster a positive classroom culture and strengthen educators' connections with their students. Baltimore City Public Schools found that restorative practices improved educators' perceptions of teaching, improved the classroom climate, and increased the respect students gave to all members of the classroom community. In Baltimore City, 72% of school staff reported an improvement in school climate and 69% reported an improvement in students' respect for one another after integrating restorative practices.

SB917 will integrate these restorative practices into public schools starting with 50 schools by June 30, 2026. The Division of Student Support, Academic Enrichment, & Education Policy within the MDSE will develop and oversee the comprehensive restorative plan for Maryland public schools. The plan will establish standards a school must meet to be considered restorative, outcomes and performance metrics, and data collection and reporting protocols to measure performance by. The bill mandates a restorative practices coach in every school and restorative practices training for school staff. In operational restorative schools, restorative coaches are often an existing staff-member who has received restorative training.

Restorative practices have already been shown to teach students how to positively engage with their education, peers, and instructors. Its whole-school level approach builds not just a more supportive school community but also kinder, safer, and more empathetic one. These practices are proven to raise attendance rates, build positive relationships, boost teacher sentiments, and improve school climate. SB917 leverages existing resources to weave restorative practices into the school day with minimal disruption, fulfilling the vision that was set out in the Blueprint three years ago.

For these reasons, I am requesting a favorable report on SB917.

With kindest regards,



Benjamin Brooks

**MAJR\_SUP\_SB0917\_24RS.pdf**

Uploaded by: Bill Carlson

Position: FAV

## MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



To: Chair Brian Feldman and the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee  
From: Jennifer Zito and Bill Carlson, MAJR Executive Committee  
Date: March 6, 2024

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR - [www.ma4jr.org](http://www.ma4jr.org)) support SB0917 to begin the effective (phased) implementation of Restorative Practices in all Maryland schools, resulting in a reduction of the "school-to-prison" pipeline.

A 2023 comprehensive study [reference 1, below] of 45 states showed that 3% of individuals serving time in U.S. prisons were under 18 when they committed the crime that led to their imprisonment. By contrast, Maryland is one of just nine states with more than 1,000 prison inmates serving time for crimes they committed as children, and one of just four states where that group is double the national average with 6% of the prison population. Maryland also has one of the largest racial disparities out of the 45 states whose data the group analyzed: more than 90% of the Maryland inmates incarcerated since childhood are people of color, and more than 80% are Black.

The report [reference 2, below] of the Maryland Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices - an 18-month study established by HB1287 (2017), urged (pg. 7) **"Maryland schools to transition to what we broadly define as 'restorative approaches to building and sustaining positive learning environments'."** It also found that (pg. 69) **"All districts interviewed reported significant ... challenges in ... implementing restorative approaches ... as funding for adequate training, coaching, and technical support"**. To date, the state has not responded to this need, even in the landmark 2020 legislation "The Blueprint for Maryland's Future", nor its implementation by the Maryland State Department of Education.

SB0917 directly addresses this important unmet need. Offsetting short term costs, it offers long term reduction in Maryland prison populations and taxpayer costs, plus gains for young adults' education and employment.

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) is a nonpartisan, all-volunteer organization of nearly 2000 Marylanders who advocate for sensible, evidence-based legislative and policy changes in Maryland's correctional practices. MAJR thanks you for the opportunity to provide input on this important legislation and urges the committee to give SB0917 a favorable report.

(1) Human Rights for Kids. (2023) [Crimes Against Humanity: The Mass Incarceration of Children in the United States](#).

(2) Maryland Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices. (2018, December). [Final report and collaborative action plan](#).



**SB0917\_Restorative\_Practices\_Schools\_MLC\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY FOR SB0917**  
**Public Schools - Restorative Practices Schools - Establishment**

**Bill Sponsor:** Senator Brooks

**Committee:** Education, Energy, and the Environment

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0917 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

The Blueprint for Education was a landmark piece of legislation designed to give Maryland's children the best education possible. It was the result of years of research and best practice recommendations. It was comprehensive in terms of the process of educating our children, but it's mandate does not cover one other important facet of education – a safe and caring environment.

Restorative practices help wrap the learning aspect of schools with emotional support. They include such things as conflict resolution, mediation, and trauma-informed care. When you have the proper emotional and social supports in a school, both teachers and students feel safer and are more engaged in the learning process.

This bill, if enacted, would require the behavioral health services coordinator in each school coordinate the development of restorative practices in the school as well as training in restorative practices. Each behavioral health services coordinator will be able to rely on coaches, who are trained in restorative practices, in order to help them develop the appropriate practices and training for their school.

The bill envisions that restorative practices are embedded in 50 schools by June 30, 2026 and in all Maryland schools by June 30, 2036. This will be a large undertaking, but if this process goes forward along with the rest of the Blueprint implementation, Maryland will truly have the best schools in the nation.

Our members support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

# **Testimony -Senate 3\_6.pdf**

Uploaded by: David Hornbeck

Position: FAV

Testimony  
David W. Hornbeck  
Voices for Restorative Schools  
Education, Energy and Environment Committee  
March 6, 2024

Senate Bill 917 – Favorable

Mr. Chair and members of the Committee

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today and also want to thank Senator Brooks for his leadership in sponsoring the bill.

As the founder of Strong Schools Maryland, no one is a stronger supporter of the Blueprint than I. It's the best education legislation in the country in the last half century. But it reflects a glaring omission. It does not explicitly deal with school culture. It is an example of outstanding strategies. They include:

1. PreKindergarten for both 3 and 4 year olds.
2. Significant tutoring for struggling students.
3. More pay for teachers, a career ladder and greater emphasis on the professional status of teaching.
4. Recognition that all poverty is not the same by creating a strong concentration of poverty factor and entitling all schools with 55% or more low-income students to be Community Schools with greater resources.
5. Higher standards for graduation.
6. Opportunities in the last two years of high school for academic acceleration, including a two year college degree and/or standards of excellence in career tech areas that can lead to industry recognized certification.
7. And so much more, including historically unprecedented emphases on equity and systemic change.

Extraordinary!

HOWEVER, as the legendary management expert Peter Drucker observed, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast" Poor culture breeds failure; good culture in an institution results in much greater success. That's not just true of schools. It's true of businesses, law firms, churches, government, even families...all institutions. Without a change in culture, the promise of the Blueprint will fall short.

So what is the status of culture in Maryland schools. As always, look to the evidence:

1. There were 56,000 suspensions last year in Maryland. 60% of those were of Black students; 27% were students with disabilities. We feed the School to Prison Pipeline.

2. 197,000 students were chronically absent last year. That's nearly a quarter of all students. A big reason - they don't want to be in a place where they don't feel safe, where they feel disrespected; where their voices are not heard.
3. 14% of our new teachers leave before the end of their 3<sup>rd</sup> year, many more before the end of their 7<sup>th</sup> year. As with students, many teachers simply don't want to be in schools where disruption makes classroom management a major issue and where they, too, are not heard and respected.
4. One third of our middle and high schoolers report mental health challenges annually, a major issue before the pandemic, much worse now.
5. All these elements of poor school culture impact Black and Brown students disproportionately. Thus, only 34% of Black students, for example, are proficient in English/Language arts while 60% of white students are. In math, 14% of Black students are proficient; 40% of white students.

Such numbers are unacceptable, and the Blueprint will not be nearly as effective in changing them if we don't change school culture at the same time.

Fortunately, there is a research-based solution that will change school culture dramatically. It is called restorative practices. House Bill 1257 (Pasteur, hearing-Ways and Means 2/28) and Senate Bill 917 (Brooks, hearing-Education, Energy and Environment, 3/6) provide the policy base to make the changes. These two bills call for all Maryland schools to become Restorative Schools over the next 12 years, phased in parallel with the Blueprint.

A Restorative School builds community and fosters positive relationships. It is a safer school. It is one that practices and celebrates racial justice, where interactions, decisions and instruction are done with equity as a compelling priority. Staff and students value one another, listen to one another. A Restorative School is one in which the principal and the leadership team model restorative behavior.

Senate Bill 917 calls for three essential things:

1. The bills establish the Restorative School as an essential characteristic of a successful school as a matter of state policy. The Maryland State Department of Education is charged with developing a comprehensive plan in consultation with stakeholders to bring Restorative Schools to scale over twelve years.
2. They call for a restorative coach in each Restorative School. A restorative coach's primary responsibility is to work with all other staff in understanding and building the tools, mind-set, the way of life that a Restorative School reflects.
3. The bills call for the requisite training. As each school begins its transformation, ALL staff...the principal, the teachers, the bus drivers, the cafeteria workers would ALL receive at least two days of training. Refresher training would occur annually.

My testimony makes clear my support of the bill as presented. However, it would be made substantially better with the following thoughts in mind. I ask you to consider them carefully. Let's make explicit that a Restorative School is a Racially Just or Equitable School. The bills

emphasize that Restorative Schools build community, foster positive relationships and other qualities that reflect changing school climate. The bills represent a major emphasis on equity and racial justice, because you cannot truly have the qualities in a school like those described in the bill without equity and racial justice being at the fore. **HOWEVER**, race is only mentioned once. That is in the context of collecting data in a disaggregated manner. The bill does not provide that a Restorative School is a racially just school or that the qualities a restorative coach must have or develop include racially cultural competence or that the accountability outcome metrics include equity factors as indicators of being a Restorative School.

In reflecting on the bills, I believe that we should be explicit in defining the culture change we seek in a Restorative School as one that is racially just and seeks to build community and foster positive relationships in which equity is a defining principle.

There may be better ways to articulate my point; I invite you to determine even better ways to underline the important role racial justice and equity play in a Restorative School or, more importantly, characterized as any Maryland school worthy of being determined to be a successful school. However, I offer these to illustrate my point.

1. Page 2 - 7-447 (A)(4)(I) Restorative practices mean evidence based classroom and schoolwide strategies designed to strengthen relationships between individuals, build social connections within a community to foster student accountability for behavior **with special emphasis on equity.**
2. Page 5 – (6)(ii) Creating a list of training programs for school personnel to implement schoolwide restorative practices designed to strengthen and improve the school climate to promote **equitable** and positive student outcomes and conduct.
3. Page 5 – (6)(III) Monitoring and disseminating updated research regarding the most effective restorative practices and best practices on implementation and training **including racial justice and equity.**
4. Page 6 - (B)(1) The Department shall develop a comprehensive plan to implement the requirements for the establishment of restorative practices schools, considering any input provided by interested stakeholders in the state **including restorative practice experts and persons with deep understanding of racial justice and equity.**
5. Page 6 – (B)(2)(I) In conjunction with the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports, identify persons qualified to provide initial restorative practices training to restorative practices coaches and personnel, **including cultural competence and understanding of equity and racial justice.**
6. Page 6-7 – (IV) 6. **Indicators reflecting growth in equitable practices and outcomes.**
7. Page 7 – (C)(2)(II). Receive intensive training on effective restorative practices and developing and integrating restorative practices into schoolwide daily practices and activities **that are implemented in a manner that reflect equity, racial justice and cultural competence.**

Changing culture is hard. It does not occur overnight. It requires persistence and perseverance. But it's an absolute prerequisite to achieving the goals of the Blueprint; indeed, it is crucial to

making Maryland the kind of place where we all can thrive and, as Governor Moore has called for, no one is left behind .

# Senate Hearing 917.pdf

Uploaded by: Edward S. Lee

Position: FAV



Edward S. Lee, President

Teach Them To Fish™, LLC

Financial Literacy Homeownership

Speaking in Support of SB# 917

Education, Energy and Environment Committee

THE INSTITUTIONALIZING OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES IN ALL MARYLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS WILL DRAMATICALLY CHANGE THE CULTURE AND BEHAVIOR OF EVERYONE ENGAGED IN THE LEARNING AND TEACHING PROCESS.

SNOW HILL HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCED A RACIAL INCIDENT INVOLVING SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS, NINJAS, BLACK HOODS, AND THE “N” WORD. THIS RESULTED IN BLACK STUDENTS WALKING OUT OF SCHOOL. THE STUDENTS TOOK THE MATTER TO THEIR SCHOOL PRINCIPAL WHO INVESTIGATED THE INCIDENT AND SUSPENDED THE WHITE STUDENTS FOR A HALF DAY. THE PARENTS OF THE WHITE STUDENTS CONTACTED THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS. AFTERWARDS A MIS-DIRECTED MEETING WAS CALLED WITHOUT THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE. THE SUPERINTENDENT OVER-ROAD THE PRINCIPAL’S HALF-DAY SUSPENSION. THE BLACK STUDENTS WALKED OUT OF SCHOOL.

DURING A MEETING SUPPORTING RESTORATIVE SCHOOLS IN OCEAN CITY, THE MOTHER OF ONE OF THE WHITE STUDENTS WHO WAS INVOLVED IN THE SNOW HILL INCIDENT SAID THAT “IF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES HAD BEEN FUNCTIONING PROPERLY IN SNOW HILL”, THE INCIDENT WOULD HAVE BEEN RESOLVED AT THE SCHOOL”.

I HAVE STARTED SEVERAL CIRCLES TO SUPPORT RESTORATIVE PRACTICES ON THE EASTERN SHORE. THE BELIEFS OF THE PARTICIPATING CIRCLE LEADERS ARE THAT THE PASSAGE OF SB# 917 IS A GAME CHANGER!

IT IS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT FROM A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE, VALUES ARE LEARNED IN THE HOME AND COMMUNITY. THESE VALUES CANNOT BE CONTROLLED BY THE SCHOOL. HOWEVER, WHERE SCHOOLS CREATE A CULTURE OF RESPECT, EMPATHY, LOVE AND THAT EVERY VOICE MATTERS, MODELED FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE TO TEACHERS, STAFF, MAINTENANCE, CAFETERIA WORKERS, BUS DRIVERS AND STUDENTS, STUDENTS WILL FEEL SAFE AND WANT TO COME TO SCHOOL, TEACHERS WILL BE ABLE TO TEACH WITHOUT DISTRACTION AND STUDENTS WILL LEARN. SB# 917 PROVIDES THE MECHANISM FOR THIS TO HAPPEN!

OVER TIME, IT WILL BE THE STUDENTS, SERVING AS CHANGE AGENTS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE COMMUNITIES IN WHICH THEY LIVE AND IN THE SCHOOLS THAT THEY ATTEND.

I URGE YOUR PASSAGE OF SB# 917!

# **2024 SB 917 schools restorative practices.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ken Phelps Jr

Position: FAV



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE  
OF MARYLAND

The Maryland Episcopal  
Public Policy  
Network

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 917  
FAVORABLE  
Public Schools—Restorative Practices Schools-Establishment**

**TO: Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair, Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Co-Chair, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee**

**FROM: Rev. Linda K. Boyd, Episcopal Diocese of Maryland**

**DATE: March 6, 2024:**

The Episcopal Church at large and the Diocese of Maryland have embraced the concept of reparations, a concept not limited to financial considerations but to a leveling of the playing field across a broad spectrum of issues, including achieving equity in quality-of-life issues, such as education. Restorative practices offer schools an alternative to traditional disciplinary actions that center on punishment for misbehavior and breaking rules. These punishments push kids—disproportionately students of color and low-income students—out of their classroom and school community. They may be suspended or simply sent to the principal’s office, but students who are pushed out may drop out of school altogether.

In contrast, restorative practices focus on resolving conflict, repairing harm, and healing relationships. They support a positive and safe school climate, prevent bullying, and reduce disciplinary incidents. A restorative culture can mitigate the negative effects of punitive discipline policies that exacerbate inequity. Research shows that education is one of the most effective weapons we have to help children become law-abiding citizens, competent and skilled workers and responsible parents.

**The Diocese of Maryland requests a favorable report on SB 917.**

**EACtestimony.SB917.pdf**

Uploaded by: Leslie Margolis

Position: FAV

# Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities

**SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**SENATE BILL 917 – PUBLIC SCHOOLS-RESTORATIVE PRACTICES SCHOOLS-ESTABLISHMENT**

**DATE: MARCH 6, 2024**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

The Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities (EAC), a coalition of more than 40 organizations and individuals concerned with education policy for students with disabilities in Maryland, provides this testimony in support of Senate Bill 917. Senate Bill 917 is a visionary bill that seeks to fundamentally change school climate by gradually, over a ten-year period, expanding restorative practices to all schools in Maryland.

Much needs to change before this vision can be realized, but Senate Bill 917 offers a roadmap for creating this change. Too many students in general, and too many students with disabilities in particular are subjected to punitive and exclusionary school discipline; rather than continuing this harmful and counter-productive practice, Senate Bill 917 would instead require school systems to place an emphasis on recruiting and training coaches to provide monitoring and improvement of schoolwide restorative practices programs and the integration of these programs into the daily practices and activities of the school.

We appreciate that the bill allows time for educators, districts, and communities to shift to a restorative practices approach. Although evidence-based classroom and school-wide strategies that can be used to support this framework do exist, the mindset of adult educators and staff is also essential to effective implementation. The gradual approach to statewide implementation allows necessary time for the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to ensure that a restorative approach is adopted by school and district leadership and to build a supportive infrastructure across the state.

Re-imagining school discipline and school climate requires commitment to a lengthy journey. But without a willingness to take the first step on that journey, change cannot happen.

For these reasons, the EAC supports Senate Bill 917.

For more information or if questions, please contact Leslie Seid Margolis, Co-Chairperson, at [lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org](mailto:lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org) or at 443-692-2505.

Respectfully submitted,

Selene Almazan, Selene Almazan Law, LLC

Rene Averitt-Sanzone, The Parents' Place of Maryland

Linda Barton, MSED, Education Consultant

Elizabeth Benevides, Autism Society of Maryland, Co-chairperson (see next page)

Ellen A. Callegary, Attorney  
Melanie Carlos, xMinds (Partnership for Extraordinary Minds)  
Stephanie Carr, S.L. Carr Education Consultants, LLC  
Mallory Finn, Tyler Cochran, Maureen van Stone, Project HEAL at Kennedy Krieger Institute  
Michelle Davis, ABCs for Life Success  
Alyssa Fieo, Office of the Public Defender  
Marjorie Guldan and Rosemary Kitzinger, Bright Futures, LLC  
Beth Ann Hancock, Charting the Course, LLC  
Leslie Seid Margolis, Disability Rights Maryland, Co-chairperson  
Mark B. Martin, Law Offices of Mark B. Martin, P.A.  
Lindsay Muir, M.Ed., Abilities Network  
Ellen O'Neill, Atlantic Seaboard Dyslexia Education Center  
Ronza Othman, National Federation of the Blind of Maryland  
Maria Ott, Attorney  
Kate Raab and Nicole Joseph, Law Offices of Nicole Joseph  
Karleen Spitulnik and Winifred Winston, Decoding Dyslexia Maryland  
Ronna Stanley, M.Ed., Loud Voices Together  
Guy Stephens, Alliance Against Seclusion and Restraint  
Liz Zogby, Maryland Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition

# **SB917 - Public Schools – Restorative Practices Sch**

Uploaded by: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus

Position: FAV





## MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

Lowe House Office Building, 6 Bladen Street, Room 200 · Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
Phone 410-841-3374 | 301-858-3374 · 800-492-7122 Ext. 3374 · Fax 410-841-3342 | 301-858-3342  
latino.caucus@house.state.md.us · www.mdlatinocaucus.org

DAVID FRASER-HIDALGO, CHAIR  
JOSELINE A. PEÑA-MELNYK, VICE-CHAIR  
GABRIEL ACEVERO, TREASURER  
JESSE T. PIPPY, SECRETARY  
JASON A. AVILA GARCIA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO: Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair  
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair  
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus

DATE: 2/28/24

RE: SB917- Public Schools- Restorative Practices Schools- Establishment

### **The MLLC supports SB917- Public Schools- Restorative Practices Schools- Establishment**

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of SB917.

SB 917 is pertinent to the Latino community in Maryland because restorative schools have the potential to close existing disparities between Latino students and other groups. Currently, Maryland's student population is 22% Hispanic/Latino students. Specifically, 17.2% of students in Baltimore City are Latino, 15.3% in Baltimore County, 39.3% in Prince George's County, and 34.6% in Montgomery County. However, there is a large gap in graduation rates between Latino students and other groups. According to the Maryland State Department of Education, the number of Hispanic students who graduated dropped from 76% to 72.3% from 2021 to 2022. In comparison, White students had a graduation rate of 93.5%, Black students had a graduation rate of 84%, and Asian students had a graduation rate 96.5% in 2022. There are likely many causes for this disparity, but SB917 seeks to fix the ones stemming from student suspensions, expulsions, arrests, office referrals, and chronic absence. In 2023, the Learning Policy Institute published about the use of restorative practices in 485 middle schools in California and their impact on school and student outcomes. They found that: "increased exposure to restorative practices is associated with a decrease in the number and duration of suspensions for all students... the benefits were most pronounced for Black and Latino/a students, suggesting that expanding practices could help reduce gaps". SB917 has the potential to transform schools which would not only increase graduation rates for Latino students but improve academic outcomes, teacher retention, and student well-being.<sup>1</sup>

SB0917 will alter 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. The bill will require the State Department of Education to develop a comprehensive plan to implement requirements for the establishment of Restorative Practices Schools.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Background provided by Senator Brooks' office.](#)

Restorative Practices means evidence-based classroom and schoolwide strategies designed to strengthen relationships between individuals and build social connections within a community to foster student accountability for behavior. The bill adds that the Consortium shall create a list of training programs for school personnel to implement schoolwide restorative practices designed to strengthen and improve the school climate to promote positive student academic outcomes and conduct; and monitor and disseminate updated research regarding the most effective restorative practices and best practices on implementation and training.

On or before December 1, 2026, and each December 1 thereafter, the Department shall report to the General Assembly, in accordance with § 2–1257 of the Article, on implementation of restorative practices schools based in the State.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on SB917.

**WrittenTestimony\_SB917\_Final.pdf**

Uploaded by: Nancy Schertzing

Position: FAV

**Testimony in Support of SB917 – FAVORABLE**

**Public Schools-Restorative Practices Schools-Establishment**

*Before the Maryland Senate Energy, Education and Environment Committee – March 6, 2024*

**To:** Hon. Benjamin Brooks, Chair, and Members of the EEE Committee

**Position:** Favorable

---

**Why SB917**

SB917 is an important step in Maryland’s evolution toward restorative schools. It provides funds for one MSDE staff position to establish a process and shepherd educators toward embracing and integrating restorative approaches into their learning communities. It also calls for additional staffing, training, and accountability measures at the local level to further restorative practices throughout Maryland public schools. This ambitious and optimistic approach could help realize the promise and vision developed over a decade of school discipline reform designed to establish learning environments for all students to succeed.

**Maryland’s Legacy of School Discipline Reform**

In 2009, the Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) began an extensive process of school discipline reform and research. That research, and the work of researchers nationally, found unambiguous evidence that exclusionary punishments, such as suspensions, fail to make schools safer<sup>1,2</sup> and can actually endanger students.

---

<sup>1</sup> American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force [APA Task Force], 2008; Fabelo, T., Thompson, M. D., Plotkin, M., Carmichael, D., Marchbanks III, M. P., & Booth, E. A. (2011). Breaking schools' rules: A statewide study of how school discipline relates to students' success and juvenile justice involvement. Justice Center of the Council of State Governments & Public Policy Research Institute. [https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Breaking\\_Schools\\_Rules\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Breaking_Schools_Rules_Report_Final.pdf);  
Losen, D. J. (2011). Discipline policies, successful schools, and racial justice. National Education Policy Center. [http://www.greatlakescenter.org/docs/Policy\\_Briefs/Losen\\_Discipline\\_PB.pdf](http://www.greatlakescenter.org/docs/Policy_Briefs/Losen_Discipline_PB.pdf);  
Losen, D. J., & Skiba, R. J. (2010). Suspended education: Urban middle schools in crisis. <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/publications/suspended-education>;

In 2017, the Maryland General Assembly charged the Maryland Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices (Maryland Commission) with recommending best practices for fostering positive school climates and eliminating the school-to-prison pipeline. In 2018, MSDE convened a Task Force on Student Discipline Regulation to examine the impact of state policies, guidelines, and discipline regulations on students, teachers, classrooms, and learning environments. These efforts resulted in recommendations for proactive approaches to building safe, equitable and positive learning climates for all students and “that the State provide adequate support for the development and implementation of restorative approaches.”<sup>3</sup> It also recommended that the Governor and Legislators establish a Restorative Schools Fund to provide grants supporting the training, implementation, and evaluation of restorative approaches to building and sustaining positive learning communities.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Maryland Adopts Restorative Approaches for Student Discipline**

In 2019, the General Assembly amended the Maryland Education Code to incorporate restorative approaches. Maryland law defines “restorative approaches” as “a relationship-focused student discipline model” that is:

- (i) Preventive and proactive;
- (ii) Emphasizes building strong relationships and setting clear behavioral expectations that contribute to the well-being of the school community;
- (iii) In response to behavior that violates the clear behavioral expectations that contribute to the well-being of the school community, focuses on accountability for any harm done by the problem behavior; and
- (iv) Addresses ways to repair the relationships affected by the problem behavior with the voluntary participation of an individual who was harmed (Md. Code Ann., Educ. § 7-306(a)(1) (2019).

---

Maryland State Department of Education. (2012). School discipline and academic success: Related parts of Maryland's education reform.

<https://marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/StudentDiscipline/SchoolDisciplineReport02272012.pdf>; Darenbourg, A., Perez, E., & Blake, J. (2010). Overrepresentation of African American males in exclusionary discipline: The role of school-based mental health professionals in dismantling the school to prison pipeline. *Journal of African American Males in Education*, 1(3), 196-211.

<sup>2</sup> For more detail about Maryland's history regarding restorative discipline prior to 2019, see the Maryland Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices Final Report (2018, pp. 16–17).

<sup>3</sup>Maryland Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices. (2018). *Final Report*, p. 9

<https://www.law.umaryland.edu/media/SOL/pdfs/Programs/ADR/STPP%20%20RP%20Commission%20Final%20Report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.80

Maryland law provides that “restorative approaches” may include “conflict resolution, mediation, peer mediation, circle processes, restorative conferences, social emotional learning, trauma-informed care, positive behavioral intervention supports, and rehabilitation.” *Id.* § 7-306(a)(2). The law requires that the State Board establish guidelines, provide technical assistance and training, and assist each county board with the implementation of the guidelines. It did not allocate funding to support schools in developing proactive approaches to building safe, equitable and positive learning climates for all students as the Maryland Commission had recommended.

### **Existing Laws are Not Enough**

The 2019 law requires the State Board to provide these services to local school systems but did not provide sufficient funding to assist with implementing the guidelines. Along the same lines, the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) only mentions restorative practices in one section, 13A.08.01.11 B. (8). Schools look to COMAR for guidance in establishing policies and procedures, not the aspirational language built into legislation—especially laws that amount to unfunded mandates.

This limited application of restorative approaches falls short of achieving the Maryland Commission’s vision of Maryland schools as safe, equitable and positive learning climates for all students. SB917 seeks to address this shortcoming.

### **SB 917 Establishes Dedicated Personnel**

A main barrier to further growth and implementation of restorative approaches is funding and staffing. SB917 begins to address this challenge by supporting an education program specialist position at MSDE to establish a comprehensive approach to integrating restorative practices. Dedicating a position at the state level responsible for managing the implementation and coordination of statewide efforts of restorative practices in schools could demonstrate the state’s commitment to restorative approaches. While one person is not sufficient for full statewide implementation, SB917 takes an intentional approach of starting with a single person at the state level.

SB917 also recognizes the vital role of local educators in implementation of restorative approaches. Becoming a restorative school, as SB917 calls for, would be impossible without countless educators embracing the restorative philosophy and integrating restorative practices into their school culture and daily interactions. To this end, the bill calls for schools to appoint a restorative practices coach and expand the responsibilities of the school system's behavioral health coordinator to include restorative approaches-related duties. Unfortunately, SB917 is silent on funding for this at the local level.

### **SB917 Addresses Barriers to Implementation**

A related barrier to successful implementation of restorative approaches is training and data collection. In addition to limited training budgets and precious time available for professional development, school environments experience a great deal of staffing transitions year over year. This results in a constant need for training, which a dedicated restorative practices coach could provide or coordinate at the school level. Further, SB917 requires collection of school-level data and reports to determine performance measures. This can help schools and the state determine where additional resources and reforms are needed if they are to achieve the Maryland Commission's vision of restorative learning communities. Unfortunately, just as with previous legislation, SB917 provides no funding to support these vital efforts which could have high price tags for local school systems.

### **SB917 Adopts a Whole-School Approach to Improve School Cultures and Student Lives**

Many restorative education experts consider a school-wide approach, as advocated in SB917, essential for the sustainability and success of implementation efforts,<sup>5</sup> and there is research to support that conclusion.<sup>6</sup> A school-wide approach supports the many elements

---

<sup>5</sup> Guckenburg, S., Hurley, N., Persson, H., Fronius, T., & Petrosino, A. (2015). *Restorative justice in U.S. schools: Summary findings from interviews with experts*. WestEd Justice & Prevention Research Center, p.7. [https://jprc.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/1447101213resource\\_restorative\\_justice\\_in\\_us\\_schools\\_summary\\_findings\\_from\\_interviews\\_with\\_experts.pdf](https://jprc.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/1447101213resource_restorative_justice_in_us_schools_summary_findings_from_interviews_with_experts.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Fronius, T., Darling-Hammond, S., Persson, H., Guckenburg, S., Hurley, N., & Petrosino, A. (2019). *Restorative justice in U.S. schools: An updated research review*. WestEd Justice and Prevention Research

needed for the shift to a restorative school culture, including the consistent use of restorative language, the alignment of school policies to a coherent restorative framework, and the creation of coaching and support systems for all school staff.

Several large school systems or state departments of education in the United States have adopted this school-wide approach, among them the Baltimore City Public Schools (2018),<sup>7</sup> Minnesota Department of Education<sup>8</sup> (1998), the San Francisco Unified School District (2017), the Oakland Unified School District<sup>9</sup> (2018), and Denver Public Schools<sup>10</sup> (2017). They have reaped benefits such as improved student behavior,<sup>11</sup> reduced drop-out rates, increased graduation rates and diminished disparities in achievement between white students and students of color<sup>12</sup>.

In Maryland restorative approaches implementation varies for a number of reasons,<sup>13</sup> including in no small part, a lack of consistent funding and guidance toward full integration. SB 917 can move our schools toward that goal.

---

Center, p.14. <https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/resource-restorative-justice-in-u-s-schools-an-updated-research-review.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Baltimore schools that adopted restorative practices in 2018, saw suspensions dropped by 44% in one year. Beyond that drop, 64% of school staff reported improved student respect for staff, 69% of school staff reported improved student respect for one another, and 72% of school staff reported improved school climate ([OSI Baltimore Restorative Justice Report, Sept. 29, 2020](#)).

<sup>8</sup> From 1998-2001, the Minnesota Dept. of Ed evaluated RA in four districts, revealing 30%-50% drops in suspensions and reductions in behavior referrals (C-DRUM testimony in favor of HB 1287, March 3, 2017) Original source: Porter, A. *Restorative Practices in Schools: Research Reveals Power of Restorative Approach, Part II*, International Institute for Restorative Practices (June 6, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> In California, Oakland Unified School District began using restorative approaches at one middle school in 2006. Within three years, that school enjoyed an 87 percent decrease in suspensions, and a decrease in violence that corresponded (We Are Teachers website, Sept. 2, 2022 [What Is Restorative Justice in Schools? \(weareteachers.com\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> Denver Public Schools saw their suspension rate fall from 10.58% to 5.63% and their graduation rates and academic scores rise significantly over their seven-year integration period ([Promising Pathways from School Restorative Practices to Educational Equity, Journal of Moral Education, August 4, 2020](#)).

<sup>11</sup> A WestEd analysis of the California Healthy Kids Survey reported that students with the highest levels of exposure to restorative practices saw less exposure to exclusionary discipline, smaller racial disparities in discipline, and improved academic achievement across races ([Can Restorative Practices Bridge Racial Disparities in Schools?, WestEd, July 2021](#)).

<sup>12</sup> Denver Public Schools has reduced their suspension disparity gap between white students and students of color over their seven years of implementing restorative practices district-wide ([Promising Pathways from School Restorative Practices to Educational Equity, Journal of Moral Education, August 4, 2020](#)).

<sup>13</sup>Guckenburg, S., Hurley, N., Persson, H., Fronius, T., & Petrosino, A. (2016). *Restorative justice in U.S. schools: Practitioners' perspectives*. WestEd Justice & Prevention Research Center, p. 9. <https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/1453742980resourcerestorativejusticeinusschoolspractitionersperspectives-3.pdf>



### **SB917 Is a Starting Point**

SB917 establishes many of the necessary foundations for Maryland to move its school discipline reform forward. Beyond that, it can help schools realize the Maryland Commission's vision of schools building safe, equitable and positive learning climates for all students. Establishing and funding a coordinator at MSDE to develop a comprehensive plan is a great first step. Requiring the establishment of key positions at the district and school level, demanding training and local data-collection by schools can foster school-wide restorative implementation. To fully achieve its lofty goals, however, SB917 should also include some form of financial support for the various positions and programs. Without the financial support at the state-level, the burden will shift to the local school systems, resulting in continued varied integration and failure to achieve the promise previous legislation offered.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, Maryland school systems are moving toward the goal of a statewide disciplinary approach which is "rehabilitative, restorative, and educational." Every local school system has taken at least some initial steps in restorative approaches implementation, typically through limited trainings around disciplinary practices, but school systems vary widely in their levels and depth of restorative approaches integration. Ultimately the goal of SB917 is to establish true restorative practices schools across our state. To achieve this, we will need to go beyond the current focus on restorative discipline. Restorative schools will integrate the restorative philosophy and informal practices at every level of their learning communities—including educators, students, families and community. C-DRUM supports this goal and hopes to work with MSDE and educators across Maryland to achieve it.

This written testimony is being submitted by the faculty and staff of the Center for Dispute Resolution at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law based on our professional experiences and not on behalf of the University of Maryland System or University of Maryland Baltimore.

---

**SB0917-EEE-FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Nina Themelis

Position: FAV



BRANDON M. SCOTT  
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations  
88 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

**SB0917**

March 6, 2024

**TO:** Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee  
**FROM:** Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations  
**RE:** Senate Bill 917 – Public Schools - Restorative Practices Schools – Establishment  
**POSITION: Support**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 917.

SB 917 would improve school culture and climate through the development of evidence-based Restorative Practices in all Maryland schools as well as the implementation of behavioral health services through trained coordinators. Restorative Practices have been shown to reduce student suspensions, expulsions, and arrests; classroom disruptions and office referrals; and chronic absence. In addition, these practices improve school-community relations, academic performance, and teacher retention.

Baltimore City Public Schools began restorative practices in schools in 2018. A 2020 Johns Hopkins study of the first 15 Baltimore schools to implement restorative practices found a 44% drop in school suspensions in the first year of implementation. Moreover, nearly three-quarters of school staff (72%) reported improved student climate, and 69% of staff reported improved student respect for one another.<sup>1</sup>

This bill will ensure that school staff are trained in Restorative Practices and that schools are accountable for effective implementation. Rigorous, evidence-based training for all school staff is crucial to the success of this approach, as is ongoing monitoring by school leadership to ensure effective implementation of Restorative Practices methods.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on SB 917.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Restorative Practices in Baltimore City Schools: A Research Update and Implementation Guide,” Open Society Institute-Baltimore (OSI), September 2020. [https://core-docs.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded\\_file/3843/BCPS/3792280/RP-Report-2020-FINAL.pdf](https://core-docs.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/3843/BCPS/3792280/RP-Report-2020-FINAL.pdf)

# **Restore Schools testimony SB917.pdf**

Uploaded by: Rebecca Gardner

Position: FAV

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and esteemed members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

As a retired public school teacher in Harford County I urge your favorable report on SB917 Restorative Schools as an essential intervention in realizing the immense positive benefit to our schoolchildren of the MD Blueprint.

The Blueprint's effectiveness requires a change in classroom culture where students and teachers feel appreciated and their voices are heard. The numbers on school suspensions, student absenteeism, teacher turn-over and student mental health concerns all point to a failure in culture as well as services. Such numbers are unacceptable, and the Blueprint will not be nearly as effective in changing them if we don't change school culture at the same time.

SB917 (HB 1257) provides a research-based solution that will create a culture in all Maryland schools where all students can thrive and no one is left behind.

The provisions in SB 917 call for:

1. A restorative coach in each Restorative School. A restorative coach's primary responsibility is to work with all other staff in understanding and building the tools, mind-set, the way of life that a Restorative School reflects.
2. The requisite training. As each school begins its transformation, ALL staff... the principal, the teachers, the bus drivers, the cafeteria workers would ALL receive at least two days of training. Refresher training would occur annually.
3. Establishing the Restorative School as an essential characteristic of a successful school as a matter of state policy. The Maryland State Department of Education is charged with developing a comprehensive plan in consultation with stakeholders to bring Restorative Schools to scale over 12 years.

Please go to WBAL Video Restorative Schools for on-sight evidence of the benefits of Restorative Practices in a Baltimore school.

Our children deserve the best that we can provide to them. They are our nation's future.

For these reasons I strongly urge your favorable report on SB 917.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Gardner

3145 E Nobles Mill Rd

Darlington 21034

**SB 917 Support. Written Testimony.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Shannon Nicholson

Position: FAV

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

**POSITION: Support**

Dear Committee Members,

I am a parent of Baltimore County students and a District 8 constituent. I am a parent working with the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (AROS).

I fully support the establishment of Restorative Practices Schools.

My son was expelled from 6<sup>th</sup> grade for chronic absenteeism in May 2023; despite me dropping him at the door and being responsive to all communications from the school. In total, he has been suspended about 10 times and 25 days of “in-school suspension” in his short career. His current diagnoses are ADHD, General Anxiety and Oppositional Defiant Disorder. My son was labeled an “absconder” in 2016. He has climbed out of several BCPS windows during his student career. My son was such a consistent behavioral ordeal that he had a code name for the walkie talkies and then a full Student Support Team (a 504 plan, similar to an IEP except no academic goals.) My son consistently scored over 95% on all state testing through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Now he’s a solid C student, his teachers still admit he’s brilliant but he only works when he “wants to.” He’s an ornery old man stuck in a middle-school body!

Establishing Restorative Practices Schools will have enormous and exponentially positive impacts. Implementing the principles and interventions outlined as Restorative Practices will change the paradigm from punitive and exclusionary mindsets and methods. Restorative Practices are a collaborative social exercise that will enhance each participating student and community member and raise up the civility and inter-connectedness of the entire school and wider community. These strategies are ways to pro-actively focus on & wrap-around students and community members that have been outliers or previously felt disconnected, ostracized, blamed, hurt or otherwise harmed.

Conversely, we can keep suspending children for infractions – taking them away from education, instruction & routine that is so critical to kids’ development, when people are experiencing crisis and chaos.

I unequivocally support Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools – Establishment. I know that my son’s education could have been more effective and less traumatic if Restorative Practices were already in place.

I appreciate you all taking the time to hear my son’s story and my experience.  
I urge you to support SB 917.

Shannon Nicholson  
8 Catapult Ct,  
Middle River, Maryland

# **SB 917 - Support - MPS WPS.pdf**

Uploaded by: Thomas Tompsett

Position: FAV





March 5, 2024

The Honorable Brian Feldman  
Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee  
2 West – Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – Senate Bill 917: Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools – Establishment

Dear Chairman Feldman and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS/WPS support Senate Bill 917: Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools – Establishment (SB 917) because it demonstrates a comprehensive approach to promoting restorative practices in schools, aiming to improve student behavior, enhance school climate, and ultimately contribute to students' overall success and well-being. SB 917 emphasizes the importance of addressing students' social-emotional, psychological, and behavioral health. By integrating restorative practices into schools, SB 917 will create a more supportive and inclusive environment for students, which can positively impact their overall well-being. In addition, restorative practices focus on preventing conflict and addressing it in a constructive manner when it arises. By implementing these practices, schools can potentially reduce instances of disciplinary actions such as suspensions, expulsions, and school arrests, leading to a more positive school climate.

SB 917 also requires collaboration among various stakeholders, including local health departments, social services, and community support partnerships. This coordinated effort ensures that students receive timely access to necessary services and supports, enhancing the effectiveness of the restorative practices approach. Finally, SB 917 mandates training programs for school personnel to effectively implement restorative practices. This investment in professional development ensures that educators have the necessary skills and knowledge to create a restorative school culture.

Therefore, for all the reasons above, MPS and WPS ask the committee for a favorable report on SB 917. If you have any questions regarding this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at [tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com](mailto:tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com).

Respectfully submitted,  
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society  
Legislative Action Committee

# **RP testimony Senate 2024.pdf**

Uploaded by: Helen Atkinson

Position: FWA

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

**POSITION: Support with Amendments**

Dear Chairman,

We're here to urge your support for SB 917 to get Restorative Practices (RP) in public schools across Maryland. We are a group of Baltimore City residents and citizens, each with an education background, focused on changing the culture of schools. Research has shown that punitive forms of discipline do nothing to address children's on-going sense of responsibility to the communities of which they are part. We believe that true accountability comes from a process of understanding behavior and repairing harm, a proven result of Restorative Practices.

Though RP is already happening in some schools in Baltimore City, standards have never been established to insure fidelity to the model. There has also never been an investment in Restorative coaches that would allow for meaningful implementation, ongoing training and support, and maintenance of standards.

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

- As noted in the fiscal note, the funding attached to this bill will be inadequate in future years 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, and they will require additional funding from the state.
- 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.

The reason we feel strongly about this is that, where it has been implemented effectively, RP has been pivotal in transforming school cultures from reactive to proactive spaces. Students acquire the ability to manage conflict and maintain healthy relationships which has positive implications for their behavior in schools and out of it. They come to feel they belong to a community they are vested in, and which, in turn, is committed to their holistic growth.

Our long term goal is to help reduce the levels of violence and conflict in our City. We currently face an unconscionable number of violent deaths and untold levels of trauma. Repair of the City needs to start in schools and neighborhoods. Restorative Practices can play a critical role in this.

We anticipate that you will offer your whole-hearted support for this essential bill.

Sincerely,

Helen Atkinson, District 43A  
Everette Parks, District 40  
Philip Yenawine, District 40  
Rebecca Yenawine, District 40

# **SB 917.Restorative Practices Schools.pdf**

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: FWA

**BILL:** Senate Bill 917  
**TITLE:** Public Schools - Restorative Practice Schools - Establishment  
**POSITION:** SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS  
**DATE:** March 6, 2024  
**COMMITTEE:** Education, Energy, and the Environment  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports the intent of this legislation to advance the statewide efforts to support restorative practices in public schools. MABE agrees that more resources should be invested to assist local school systems in providing training on, and implementation and evaluation of, restorative approaches that build and sustain positive learning communities.

MABE agrees that restorative approaches should play an integral role in the administration of Maryland's public schools. Such proactive practices, implemented following appropriate professional development and training of all staff, can make significant improvements in school climate and the learning conditions for all students to learn. However, MABE believes that the comprehensive professional development and staffing provisions of Senate Bill 917 are overly ambitious and wholly unfunded at the local level. Therefore, MABE respectfully requests that the bill be transformed into a workgroup to develop recommendations to phase-in the expansion of restorative practices, including the designation of restorative practice schools, and the various funding and policy issues raised in the bill.

Maryland school systems are committed to each and all of their students becoming college and career ready and ensuring that the appropriate use of school discipline furthers that goal. Following several years of deliberations, the State Board of Education adopted new regulations in 2014 to dramatically reform the ways in which teachers, principals, and superintendents may suspend or expel students, and define the educational and behavioral supports to be provided to students in disciplinary situations. Therefore, MABE adopted the position of supporting the State Board's initiative to require local boards of education to reform their student discipline policies to:

- Prohibit "zero tolerance" policies;
- Reflect a philosophy that fosters positive behavior;
- Provide continuous education services to all suspended and expelled students; and
- Hold school systems accountable for reducing and eliminating disproportionate impacts of student discipline policies on minority students.

Legislation enacted in 2019 requires local boards of education to revise local board policies related to student discipline to provide for restorative practices. This law defines "restorative approaches" as a relationship-focused student discipline model that (1) is preventative and proactive; (2) emphasizes building strong relationships and setting clear behavioral expectations that contribute to the school community well-being; (3) in response to behavior that violates clear behavioral expectations, focuses on accountability for any harm done by the problem behavior; and (4) addresses ways to repair the relationships affected by the problem behavior with the voluntary participation of an individual who was harmed.

For the reasons outlined above, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 917 if converted through amendments to establish a workgroup to develop funding and policy recommendations.

**SB917\_MSEA\_Lamb\_FWA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lauren Lamb

Position: FWA

**FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

**Senate Bill 917**

**Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools - Establishment**

**Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment**

**March 6, 2024**

**Lauren Lamb**

**Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 917 with amendments. This bill would alter the duties of behavioral health services coordinators and the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports related to implementing Restorative Practices Schools throughout the State. It would also require the State Department of Education to develop a comprehensive plan to implement requirements for the establishment of Restorative Practices Schools and require the Department to annually report to the General Assembly on the implementation of Restorative Practices Schools.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

We unequivocally believe that restorative justice practices are essential in creating a positive, safe, equitable, and healthy school environment and culture. A large body of evidence suggests that restorative justice practices build and improve relationships that foster strong school communities and dismantle the school to prison pipeline.

To that end, we appreciate that this bill seeks to establish restorative practices training for school employees. Statewide standards for staff training in a variety of restorative approaches, including de-escalation strategies,



implicit bias, and trauma-informed practices are paramount to ensuring that historically marginalized students learn in a safe, healthy, and supportive environment. We would urge greater specificity regarding the standards and scope for such training, including any attendant changes to professional expectations or school policies. Educators will need clarity around how to approach the instructional time required to implement practices such as restorative circles or peer mediation. Formal or informal expectations around lesson pacing, daily routines, and behavioral policies must therefore be reevaluated and negotiated with these new practices in mind, and any changes must be clearly communicated to ensure that restorative approaches are adopted thoroughly and consistently. It is also important that all training is subject to collective bargaining such that pay, hours, and professional expectations can be clearly defined by LEAs and local unions.

To maximize the positive impact to students, restorative practices should be aligned with other school support frameworks. Staff must coordinate the evaluation, planning, and implementation of restorative practices, community school wraparound supports, and other targeted interventions at both the state and local levels. While the hiring of county board-employed restorative coaches will be an asset to this process, we remain concerned the implementing restorative practices will require more staffing and technical support than is currently reflected in the bill. Requiring dedicated restorative practices staff through MSDE and clarifying the role of restorative coaches would promote alignment with related support frameworks. Further, we believe that students will be best served when the school-based staff primarily responsible for implementing and guiding restorative practices are employees of the county board.

A commitment to restorative practices requires a mindset shift, one that we sincerely believe can transform schools to be more equitable and just. We recognize the urgency of advancing restorative practices across the state and we hope to continue this important conversation.

**With amendments reflecting the concerns above, we would urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 917.**

**LeKisha Carr Testimony SB 917 (1).pdf**

Uploaded by: Lekishia Carr

Position: FWA

**Education, Energy, and the Environment**  
**Senate Bill 917: Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools – Establishment**

**March 6, 2024**  
**POSITION: Support**

My name is Lekisha Carr.

I am a mother and former head start teacher. I am writing regarding the current lack of safety in schools and communities. We need a bill that can help our schools with the resources to meet these needs for safety.

I value education for all students. I have kids who have special needs and disabilities and I have found that often schools are not providing the resources my kids need. I have worked to find outside resources to help them and I do a lot at home, but we need more. My high schooler has bad anxiety around school. He has so many life experiences that have led him to not trust school. The negativity and lack of safety is so high that he doesn't want to go anymore. I need him to go so he can get the academic knowledge, but he wants me to be real with him, and right now I can't guarantee his safety. His school has had two killings and these deaths have taken a toll. Even though my son can defend himself and the school provided some mental health services at the time of these events, the long term issues of grief and violence are still present. We need people who are designated to meet these needs.

As a concerned parent, I want to better our schools. I hope you will do the same.  
Can I count on you to support SB 917?

# **BTU Testimony in Support of SB 917.pdf**

Uploaded by: Nathan Ferrell

Position: FWA



AFT 340 AFL-CIO  
Seton Business Park  
5800 Metro Drive, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Baltimore, MD 21215-3209

## **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.**

Telephone: (410) 358-6600 Fax: (410) 358-2894 Website: [www.baltimoreteachers.org](http://www.baltimoreteachers.org)

# **AROS testimony on RP (1).pdf**

Uploaded by: Rebecca Yenawine

Position: FWA



**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



# **SB 917 Restorative Practices Schools - UNF.pdf**

Uploaded by: SHARON CARRICK

Position: UNF



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

**SB0917 (1).pdf**

Uploaded by: Suzanne Price

Position: UNF

SB0917 is just 'Woke' tactics of nonsensical social-emotional learning to solve real life problems. It's a farce. The 'woke' insanity has caused the problems in the first place. Parents should be the custodian of their children's health and mental well-being, not bureaucrats from government public schools.

“RESTORATIVE PRACTICES” MEANS EVIDENCE–BASED 7 CLASSROOM AND SCHOOLWIDE STRATEGIES DESIGNED TO STRENGTHEN 8 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS AND BUILD SOCIAL CONNECTIONS WITHIN 9 A COMMUNITY TO FOSTER STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY FOR BEHAVIOR.

Who's 'restorative practices' and who's 'evidence'?

Just went to find a synonym for manipulation and this popped up, “What is another word for manipulator? Other words used to describe manipulators often refer to their behavior. For example, sometimes manipulators are referred to as "emotional manipulators," "exploiters," or "controllers.””

Let's be reminded when the world shut down and you shut our children out of schools, you had no plan then to restore what they lost. It seems you have no plan now that so many are not learning or passing test scores in Math, Reading, and Science +++ . Stick to educational excellence if that is even possible at this point?

SAY no to this and please leave our kids mental health alone. It is relatable when others call for the BOE to be abolished.

Suzanne Price  
AACo, MD

**SB 917 LOI.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dr. Carey Wright

Position: INFO

---

**BILL:** SB 917 – Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools - Establishment      **DATE:** March 6, 2024

**SUBJECT:** Letter of Information      **COMMITTEE:** Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

**POSITION:** No Position

**CONTACT:** Akilah Alleyne  
[akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov](mailto:akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov)  
410-767-0504

---

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is providing this letter of information on Senate Bill (SB) 917 - *Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools – Establishment*.

### **SB 917**

SB 917 requires MSDE to develop a comprehensive plan to implement Restorative Practices Schools. MSDE, in conjunction with the Maryland Consortium of Coordinated Community Supports (Consortium), will identify persons qualified to provide restorative practices training to restorative practices coaches and school personnel. The comprehensive plan developed under this bill must establish timelines for the completion of training for restorative practices coaches, behavioral health coordinators, and school personnel in 50 schools on or before July 30, 2026, and in all public schools in the state on or before June 30, 2036.

### **Restorative Approaches**

SB 917 requires the implementation of “restorative practices” as defined in the bill. The term “restorative approaches” is used in Education Article § 7-306, which defines restorative approaches as “a relationship-focused student discipline model.” The statute lists nine practices that are restorative practices. Research from the Learning Policy Institute suggests that the use of restorative practices can lead to a reduction in both the rates and duration of suspensions and can also enhance academic achievement (See: [Fostering belonging, transforming schools: The impact of restorative practices](#)). However, the desired outcomes are contingent upon several factors including the specific practices employed, fidelity of implementation, and staff capacity.

### **Current Activities**

In Education Article § 7-306, “alternative school discipline practices” are defined as any disciplinary practice employed in a public school that does not involve in-school or out-of-school suspension. MSDE has been providing support and guidance to local education agencies (LEAs) on these alternative disciplinary approaches. This is achieved through collaborative partnerships with expert organizations such as the Center for Dispute Resolution at the University of Maryland (C-DRUM).

Currently, MSDE is engaging in monthly collaborations with LEA leaders specializing in restorative practices. The aim is to provide professional learning opportunities and share valuable resources. MSDE has published several documents to guide LEAs towards a more restorative approach to student discipline. These include *The Maryland Guidelines for a State Code of Discipline*, *Maryland's Model Policy on Bullying, Harassment, and Intimidation*, and *A Trauma-Informed Approach for Maryland Schools*.

### **MSDE Support and Operational impact**

MSDE supports the goals of SB 917 to expand implementation of the restorative practices framework with fidelity in Maryland's public schools. MSDE will work with the Consortium to ensure that evidence-based practices are utilized, by creating a list of training programs for school personnel to implement schoolwide restorative practices designed to strengthen and improve school climate to promote positive student achievement outcomes. This work will include monitoring and disseminating updated research regarding the most effective restorative practices and best practices on implementation and training. Recommended programs will recognize the disproportionality of classroom management referrals. The effective and sustained implementation of restorative practices has the potential to reduce the disproportionate use of punitive measures and contribute to a safer environment for all students.

MSDE would need to dedicate staff to this task. MSDE will need a full time Specialist and additional funding to create data systems to collect data required under this bill that MSDE does not currently collect including student office referrals, and teacher turnover and absenteeism rates. The development of the comprehensive plan will include stakeholder input, and timelines for training.

SB 917 requires that the plan establish standards for when a school may be designated a restorative practices school. This work is crucial as the term "restorative practices" can be broadly interpreted to encompass a range of strategies. The standards will include intended outcomes and performance metrics that the use of restorative practices will achieve, including disciplinary actions taken, student absenteeism and truancy, rates of teacher turnover and absenteeism, relevant mental health indicators, and school climate indicators. The plan must establish school-level and LEA level data collection and reporting standards and requirements.

### **Discipline Data**

The Maryland Annotated Code § 7-306 of the Education Article requires MSDE to provide an annual report to the General Assembly on the uses of restorative approaches in the State and a review of disciplinary practices and policies within the State. Additionally, Section 7-306 requires that MSDE disaggregate student discipline data by race, ethnicity, gender, disability status, eligibility for free or reduced-price meals or an equivalent measure of socioeconomic status, English language proficiency, and type of discipline for the State, each LEA, and each public school. Provisions in SB 917 requiring certain data and disaggregation thereof may be duplicative of existing law.

MSDE respectfully submits this letter of information for your review and consideration. Please contact Akilah Alleyne, Ph.D., Executive Director of Governmental Affairs, at 410-767-0504, [akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov](mailto:akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov), if additional information is needed.

**SB 917. CRSD. RP Schools - 2024.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kelly Quinn

Position: INFO



# MARYLAND COALITION TO REFORM SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

**SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, and the ENVIRONMENT**  
**SENATE BILL 917: Public Schools- Restorative Practices Schools- Establishment**  
**DATE: March 6, 2024**

**POSITION: Letter of Information**

The Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline (CRSD) brings together advocates, service providers, and community members dedicated to transforming school discipline practices within Maryland's public school systems. CRSD is committed to the fair and equitable treatment of ALL students, including pregnant or parenting students, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and socio-economic status, and reducing barriers to learning for ALL students. CRSD has been a vocal advocate of Restorative Practices and decreasing our state's dependence on punitive discipline for the last 10 years. While **CRSD strongly supports the goal of SB 917 to expand Restorative Practices in Maryland, we do not believe the legislation as written will be able to successfully scale Restorative Practices statewide, and achieve the shifts in school culture and disciplinary outcomes needed.** Here are some of our key concerns:

- **Bill places a significant financial burden on the local education agencies (LEA) to adequately cover the costs of implementing Restorative Practices in the schools.** The fiscal note states that Montgomery County expects the bill would cost the district an additional \$18 million annually. There are also significant costs for training all school employees, both initially and ongoing, that LEAs will have to cover.
- **Bill provides insufficient funds for Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to provide the guidance necessary to enable a paradigm shift in how we address school culture and discipline practices.** Training and technical assistance for LEAs and school staff is necessary to make needed changes to policies and support local schools in implementing the strategy.
- **Bill does not adequately address the scaling-up challenges of state-wide implementation.** Scaling any reform from a few selected schools to more than 1,400 schools across the State is likely to encounter many unanticipated challenges that must be addressed before implementation. These range from generating broad local support for the program (e.g., local district and staff buy-in and ownership) to the institutional and structural changes that are required for successful implementation (e.g., sufficient resources, trade-offs in establishing spending and program priorities, developing a Restorative Practices support infrastructure). Currently, there is insufficient buy-in to implement a state-wide strategy and gain sufficient community buy-in to the approach outlined in the bill.
- **Rushed or poorly communicated roll-out will harm the goal of a more restorative Maryland.** Unfortunately, Maryland already has a history of poor implementation of restorative practices due to insufficient training and poor community engagement.<sup>1 2 3</sup> A rushed or poorly

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/07/15/restorative-justice-montgomery-county-schools/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/02/16/antisemitism-walt-whitman-high-school-opaque-social-justice-jargon/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.baltimoresun.com/2023/10/19/howard-superintendent-and-union-end-years-of-collaboration-to-train-educators-in-restorative-justice/?clearUserState=true>

communicated roll-out could cause schools and districts to revert to the status quo and favor more punitive discipline policies, resulting in poor student and teacher disciplinary outcomes.<sup>4</sup>

- **Bill must be rooted in a framework that centers cultural responsiveness and racial equity.** If school staff are not trained in culturally responsive practice, students' behavior can be misinterpreted and the root causes of misbehavior can go unaddressed. MSDE and school districts have made progress in establishing Restorative Practices in public schools throughout the state over recent years. However, the practice is still in its infancy and there is much to gain from ensuring that Restorative Practices is life-affirming and responsive to the needs of Black students, Latinx and other students of color, and students who identify as LGBTQ+. Many studies have shown that racial bias is prevalent among teachers and school staff.<sup>5 6</sup>
- **The Restorative Practices Coach model is highly promising and worth considering, however, it has not yet been validated.**<sup>7</sup> CRSD is concerned about the significant cost of this measure, as the state is simultaneously trying to fund the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. In light of the current educator and clinician shortage, there are likely insufficient high-quality candidates to fill a Restorative Coach position in each of our more than 1,400 public schools. It is possible that greater harm could be caused by placing individuals who are ill-equipped or ill-suited for the Restorative Coach role, than not having a designated coach at all.
- **Insufficient Restorative Practices experts to provide the "intensive training"** described in the bill. Districts currently implementing Restorative Practices on a limited basis have exhausted the availability of trained practitioners, even after recruiting from surrounding states. To be effective, the school-based Restorative Coaches will need extensive technical assistance and coaching from either these Restorative Practices consultants or new hires at the district level. It is questionable whether the state has the human capital, let alone funds, to provide this extensive support.

#### *CRSD recommends:*

- **Convening of a commission or a workgroup to study scaling-up Restorative Practices based on research.** This work includes developing an implementation plan that identifies strategies that will increase the chances of success state-wide and institute a paradigm shift in how we address school culture and discipline practices. A well-defined and articulate plan is needed before requiring statewide implementation.
- **Expand the bill's implementation window, providing additional interim goals that include LEA and MSDE office staff.** Educators, districts, and communities will require significant time to shift to a restorative approach. Restorative Practices, as defined by the 2019 Governor's Commission is a combination of "relationship-focused mindset and distinctive tools".<sup>8</sup> While there are evidence-based classroom and school-wide strategies, the mindset of adult educators and staff is essential. Unfortunately, mindset can not be quickly changed by an act of legislation. Without sufficient time, buy-in, and a restorative approach adopted by school and district leadership, scaling up Restorative Practices will not be effective. We would also encourage districts and MSDE to create pipelines to train and support restorative coaches.

---

<sup>4</sup><https://www.wypr.org/wypr-news/2024-02-12/suspensions-are-increasing-in-baltimore-city-schools-is-that-a-solution-or-another-problem>

<sup>5</sup> Starck, Jordan, et al. Teachers are people too: May 2020. Examining the Racial Bias of Teachers Compared to Other American Adults. Educational Researcher.  
[https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/0013189X20912758?casa\\_token=Y2RAU9sDmvgAAAAA:ncmagk0D8VVVLBg5x9hJ6WfVI\\_Qgk9nrWqxUUMFwFp4myKTmlU4mQ1YGQz3t-GgDNYLTjwAJsxkKpQ](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/0013189X20912758?casa_token=Y2RAU9sDmvgAAAAA:ncmagk0D8VVVLBg5x9hJ6WfVI_Qgk9nrWqxUUMFwFp4myKTmlU4mQ1YGQz3t-GgDNYLTjwAJsxkKpQ)

<sup>6</sup> Teachers are people too: Racial bias among American educators. July 2020. The Brookings Institution.  
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/teachers-are-people-too-racial-bias-among-american-educators/#:~:text=Our%20most%20precise%20raw%20estimates,white%2Fanti%2DBlack%20bias.>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0145935X.2023.2191943>

<sup>8</sup> <https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5300/sc5339/000113/023600/023694/20190078e.pdf>

- **Work first with teachers, administrators, and district staff to create a restorative culture and practices among adults.**<sup>9</sup> To ensure a restorative mindset in Maryland, the MSDE and LEAs must do more than create reporting standards. They must also build a supportive infrastructure across the state, develop a restorative culture among adults, and revise disciplinary and human capital policies to support the implementation of Restorative Practices.
- **Focus on implementing Restorative Practices in place of Punitive Discipline Practices in Maryland codes of conduct.** Districts and states that have successfully implemented Restorative Practices, also revise their discipline strategies, school climate initiatives, school behavioral support, and special education processes to reflect a Restorative mindset.<sup>10 11 12</sup> MSDE and LEAs should be required to revise policies to reflect a restorative approach.
- **Increase the capacity of the Maryland Consortium for Coordinated Community Supports to effectively evaluate this effort.** The research on Restorative Practices already lags behind implementation. Maryland districts that have been implementing Restorative Practices for more than five years are still struggling to effectively and efficiently evaluate school practice. CRSD also recommends including parent and Restorative Practices professionals in this body to ensure that schools are being held accountable to the restorative process, not just suspension data. The current bill needs to address the scale of this challenge.
- **The implementation plan needs to include strategies and training that will help teachers and school staff become aware of their own biases and how to mitigate them.** Beyond resolving disputes among students, Restorative Practices must also be about creating a social environment where students can learn about each other's lived experiences and culture, and how to empathize and develop positive relationships with each other. And the practice must be about helping Black and Brown children, and those in the LGBTQ+ community, to critically think about their place in the world and help them develop strong identities and self-worth to ameliorate the negative societal messages that they often internalize.

In summary, CRSD supports the expansion of Restorative Practices in Maryland Schools. We have concerns about the scale and strategy of the current bill. Poorly implementing Restorative Practices at too many schools will challenge the long-term success of the initiative. CRSD recommends that lawmakers consider a longer implementation window, allocating additional resources for training and evaluation, and increasing the resources within MSDE and LEAs to support school principals, communities, and Restorative Coaches.

For more information contact: Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline  
[CRSDMaryland@gmail.com](mailto:CRSDMaryland@gmail.com)

### **CRSD Members**

Progressive Maryland  
 The Choice Program at UMBC  
 FreeState Justice  
 League of Women Voters of Maryland  
 ACLU of Maryland  
 Project HEAL at the Kennedy Krieger Institute

<sup>9</sup> <https://rjpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/Implementation-Guide-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Michigan Code 380.1310c US Dept of Ed Compilation of MI School Discipline Laws and Codes:  
<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/discipline-compendium/Michigan%20School%20Discipline%20Laws%20and%20Regulations.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/docs/default-source/default-document-library/discipline-code-grade-6-12-english.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.cps.edu/globalassets/cps-pages/about-cps/policies/student-code-of-conduct/for-print\\_cps\\_srr\\_2023\\_brochure\\_eng\\_06.16.23.pdf](https://www.cps.edu/globalassets/cps-pages/about-cps/policies/student-code-of-conduct/for-print_cps_srr_2023_brochure_eng_06.16.23.pdf)

# **SB 917 - Informational.pdf**

Uploaded by: Shamoyia Gardiner

Position: INFO



**Informational Testimony for:  
Senate Bill 917: Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools – Establishment**

**Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

**Position: Informational**

March 6, 2024

**Strong Schools Maryland wishes to provide the following testimony related to Senate Bill 917, Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools – Establishment.** Restorative approaches to school discipline, and restorative practices broadly, are a logical complement to the work Maryland is doing to build a statewide World Class Education system under the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. In short, schools thrive when their communities thrive, and school communities thrive when everyone is secure in their sense of belonging to that community.

If Maryland is to succeed in creating that system of World Class Schools, adults in school buildings and at central offices will have to do away with the notion that anyone—student or staff—is disposable. It is incongruent and unfair to expect that educators at the school level will build supportive, restorative cultures in their buildings while being managed by central office and state leaders who may still subscribe to punitive, dominance-centered ways of operating.

In 2018, the state’s Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices produced [a report](#) that recommended many changes that are reflected in this bill. However, the report’s focus on racial equity and cultural competency is not reflected in the bill language. School discipline is inherently an issue about race and culture in our schools, even as we work to diversify the state’s educator workforce.

We believe the bill would benefit from specifying the reporting criteria or detailing the components of the annual December 1 report on implementation.

Pairing policy with funding will be vital in the sustainable success of restorative practices in public schools across the state. The bill’s fiscal note indicates that by fiscal year 2026, participating local school systems will see significant increases in expenditures related to hiring restorative practices coaches. We wonder whether local grantees of the Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports can mitigate those potential costs through collective funding of the role.

We maintain that the legislature must meet its commitment to fully funding the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future—both by leading with example from the state level *and* by ensuring that conditions are such that local jurisdictions can feasibly meet their own obligations to fully fund their schools.

*For more information, contact Shamoyia Gardiner at [shamoyia@strongschoolsmaryland.org](mailto:shamoyia@strongschoolsmaryland.org)*

# **SB0917 Restorative Practices Schools Establishment**

Uploaded by: sharlimar douglass

Position: INFO



**March 5, 2024**

**The Honorable Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair  
The Honorable Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

**RE: Letter of Information – HB1257 (Public Schools – Restorative Practices – Establishment)**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, Committee Members and Bill Sponsor Senator Brooks,

The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE), a coalition of education advocacy, civil rights, and community-based organizations committed to eliminating racial disparities in Maryland’s education system, is writing today to submit a letter of information regarding SB0917, as introduced by Senator Brooks. While we agree with the merits of building a more systematic framework and strategic planning for the introduction of restorative practices into more Maryland public schools, we wish to further suggest several key considerations for legislators to keep in mind as the General Assembly analyzes potential next steps.

As an advocacy coalition that centers the needs of students of color in Maryland’s public education system – young people who far too often face tremendous systemic inequities and challenges in their school experience – we recognize the promise and potential in seeking a restorative practices model for our state’s public schools, particularly regarding student social, emotional, and academic development (SEAD) and school discipline and belonging practices. According to recent MSDE data, Black students represented more than 60% (33,984) of all instances of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions in Maryland, despite only comprising 33.2% of the student population in the same school year. In contrast, white students, who represented 33.9% of the population in Maryland’s public schools, only accounted for a little over 20% of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, representing a striking disparity in student disciplinary outcomes along racial lines.<sup>1</sup>

Addressing and removing such disparities is a paramount priority of MAREE. We agree with the intent of SB0917 that restorative practices offer a valuable culture shift and alternative to the harmful status quo of exclusionary discipline that has been commonplace in our state’s schools. Even more, restorative practices at their core are concerned with the important work of improving and strengthening relationships between people and communities. These models have immense potential to introduce a transformative approach to our schools that, if implemented with fidelity and in coordination with other evidence-based strategies, could foster a more productive, collaborative, and affirming educational experience where all

---

<sup>1</sup> “Number of Suspensions and Expulsions by Major Offense Category - 2021-2022 Out-of-School Suspensions and Expulsions in Maryland Public Schools,” Maryland State Department of Education, [https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SSP/20212022Student/2022\\_Student\\_Suspensions\\_BySchool\\_OutOfSchool.pdf](https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SSP/20212022Student/2022_Student_Suspensions_BySchool_OutOfSchool.pdf)

students can thrive. However, the successful implementation of such a shift hinges on several critical factors that cannot be overlooked:

- *Adequate Allocation of Fiscal and Human Capital Resources:* Implementing restorative practices at scale, even with the suggested pilot of 50 Maryland schools by June 2026, will require significant investments of people and funding to properly hire, train, and establish the cultural conditions in our districts and schools to be conducive to success. In order for required personnel to receive the high-quality preparation in restorative practices necessary to move the needle for students, Maryland would have to dedicate financial resources and coordinate expert technical assistance to support districts over the implementation period and commit to ongoing evaluation for impact.
- *Diverse, Intentional Community Engagement:* Restorative practices have their roots in communities of color, spaces where neighborhoods and education systems thrived on respect, love, harmony, and positive learning. In order for restorative practices to flourish and realize their fullest impact, districts and schools must thoughtfully engage with stakeholders – parents, caregivers, neighborhood leaders, and other community-based organizations – of all backgrounds in order to increase and sustain a restorative culture. Such engagement is required to gain buy-in and reinforcement both within and beyond a school’s walls.
- *Commitment to Anti-Racism and Anti-Bias:* Restorative practices represent a step in the right direction that turns away from our country and our state’s long history of educational violence, harm, and seclusion. Our status quo – and the disparities along racial and socioeconomic lines far too often witnessed in our current system – has inherently racist elements. Any effort to incorporate and implement restorative practices must include an explicit commitment to anti-racism and anti-bias.

By approaching the expansion of restorative practices in Maryland’s schools with intentionality, allocating adequate fiscal and human resources, providing comprehensive learning opportunities, and fostering genuine community and stakeholder engagement, we can create schools where all students feel valued, respected, and empowered to succeed. While we believe SB0917 in its current form requires a more robust and strategic approach in order to most thoughtfully strengthen restorative practices in our public education system, we remain committed to lending our voices and thought partnership to the important goal of getting it right for Maryland’s students now and in the future.

peace and truth,  
sharlimar douglass

Chair

The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE)