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**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.

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<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)