

HOUSE WAYS and MEANS
HOUSE BILL 1257: Public Schools- Restorative Practices Schools- Establishment
DATE: February 28, 2024

POSITION: Support

Dear Chairman,

We're here to urge your support for SB 917 and HB 1257 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. These bills would enable all of this.

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 these essential bills.

Sincerely,

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

