

Testimony on Maryland House Bill 1257
Restorative Schools Act
POSITION: SUPPORT

Dear esteemed members of the committee,

My name is Ann Coy, and I am honored to write to you as a dedicated educator and parent who has witnessed firsthand the transformative power of restorative practices in our schools. Today, I want to share my experiences and insights on how these practices have made a profound impact on the lives of our students in Maryland and express my strong support of HB1257 The Restorative Schools Act

I have been an educator for 15 years, and during this time, I have seen the challenges our students face, especially in Baltimore City. However, I've also had the privilege of incorporating restorative practices into my teaching methodology, and the results have been nothing short of remarkable. In one year I had a class of 37 fourth graders. Restorative Practices—hosting daily circles—where students could each have a voice, and hear from their peers, set the tone for my classroom.

Restorative practices have fundamentally shifted the culture within my classrooms. By prioritizing open communication, empathy, and personal responsibility, we have created an environment where students feel heard, understood, and valued. The sense of community that has blossomed as a result is palpable, fostering positive relationships among students, teachers, and administrators alike.

One of the most significant impacts I've witnessed is in the realm of disciplinary issues. Instead of resorting to punitive measures, restorative practices provide a constructive framework for addressing conflicts and behavioral challenges. Through facilitated conversations and mediations, students learn to understand the consequences of their actions and work towards resolution. The reduction in disciplinary incidents has been notable, creating a more focused and conducive atmosphere for learning.

Beyond disciplinary matters, restorative practices have positively influenced academic and social development. Students are more engaged in their studies, as they feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for their actions. This holistic approach not only addresses immediate issues but contributes to the long-term growth and success of our students.

I write today in support of legislation that mandates the incorporation of restorative practices in Maryland schools. This aligns with the visionary Blueprint for Maryland's Future. By legislating the use of these practices, we can ensure that every school in our state adopts a methodology that prioritizes equity, inclusivity, and the overall well-being of our students.

In closing, I urge you to consider the profound impact that restorative practices can have on our schools and, more importantly, on the lives of our students. Let us embrace a future where empathy and understanding guide our educational approach, creating a nurturing environment that supports the success of every child in Maryland. I urge you to support of HB1257 The Restorative Schools Act. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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