



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Dear Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I present House Bill 795, **The Peace and Conflict Studies Education Act**. As I sat down to pen this bill, my heart was heavy with sorrow and regret. The tragic loss of young lives that occurred at my school is something that I will never forget. As I lay in bed, night after night, unable to sleep, the idea for this bill began to take shape in my mind. I knew that something had to be done to prevent such a tragedy from happening again. I hope that by teaching conflict resolution to students, we can prevent future incidents of violence and promote a more peaceful and harmonious school community. While nothing can bring back the lost lives, we should be determined to honor their memory by working tirelessly to create a safer and more compassionate world for all.

This bill requires the State Department of Education to develop curriculum content standards for a high school peace and conflict studies course and mandates that each county board of education implements this course in each public high school .

Our students need to learn about conflict resolution and peaceful communication. By providing students with the necessary skills to navigate conflicts and engage in productive conversations, we are investing in their future and equipping them with the tools to succeed in a diverse and interconnected world.

The curriculum content standards outlined in this bill cover various topics, including cybersecurity, environmental justice, history, international studies, law and criminal justice, peace engineering, philosophy, social work, technology, and more. These standards will enable students to gain a deep understanding of the causes and effects of conflicts. They will equip them with the skills to constructively and peacefully resolve disputes.

Furthermore, this bill requires each public high school to hire a mediator to educate and support students and school personnel regarding conflict resolution and peaceful communications. This is an essential component of the bill as it ensures students can access the necessary resources and support to resolve conflicts peacefully.

The Peace and Conflict Studies program in high school can bring numerous benefits to students, their schools, and the broader community. Some of these benefits include:

1. **Improved Conflict Resolution Skills:** The program can equip students with skills to handle conflicts in a non-violent and constructive manner. This can help them avoid violent confrontations and build stronger relationships.
2. **Increased Empathy and Understanding:** The program can teach students about different cultures and perspectives, promoting greater empathy and understanding among students. This can lead to a more inclusive and harmonious school community.
3. **Reduced Violence:** By promoting peaceful conflict resolution and teaching non-violent communication skills, the program can help reduce incidents of violence in schools. This, in turn, can create a safer learning environment for students and staff.
4. **Improved Academic Performance:** Studies have shown that students who participate in programs focused on conflict resolution and social-emotional learning tend to perform better academically.
5. **Life Skills:** The program can provide students with life skills that they can apply in their personal and professional lives, such as active listening, effective communication, and negotiation.

This bill also REQUIRE COMPLETION OF AT LEAST 8 STUDENT SERVICE 20 HOURS DEDICATED TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION TRAINING AND RELATED ACTIVITIES.

In summary, the Peace and Conflict Studies program can help students become more skilled in conflict resolution, increase their empathy and understanding of others, reduce incidents of violence, improve academic performance, and develop life skills that can benefit them in many areas of their lives.

Therefore, please support House Bill 795, which promotes peace and conflict resolution in our schools and communities. I appreciate your consideration of this critical issue request the favorabl request.

Sincerely,
Harry Bhandari, Ph.D.