

FAVORABLE

To: The Ways and Means Committee 2/28/24

Re: HB1257

Thank you for this opportunity to address you Madame Chair Atterbeary, Madame Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the Ways and Means Committee. The bill before you is an effort to change the culture in our schools. The current and long term culture that precedes the Blueprint for Maryland is still one of differentiation that ignores the essential fact that if our children do not learn to work together, our society will continue to be fractured, not productive, and exhibit uncivilized behavior in many of the ways that we continue to make laws to overcome every year.

The Restorative Practice Schools being proposed are NOT a remedy for particular bad behavior. They are a process to develop respect and admiration for the qualities each and every child and each and every adult bring to the process of schooling each and every day. This is so important because our society has been structured in such a way that there are whole communities, Black and white, where children do not feel they belong and see no reason to strive to excel. School is the one area in which we all come together and thus must be where we develop the habits of good interrelationships necessary for us to survive in the 21st century. Outside of school, our technology has provided us with the capability to avoid direct contact with one another and in the process, think that people are only about thought. But, through the circle processes practiced throughout the Restorative Practices Schools, youth and adults reach a higher level of feeling and understanding of the value each person brings to the life we all share. Watching the process makes you wish you were starting over and being able to experience the atmosphere too many of us lacked as we went through school. Unfortunately, we continue to experience a world where too many of us still do not feel accepted and valued.

This cultural acceptance I am talking about is what will drive Maryland to be not only a great place to work, but the best place to enjoy a rich life with neighbors of all kinds who respect one another and feel like we can all contribute to a better world.

Respectfully submitted by

Thornell Jones, President of World Class Graduates-Maryland

We are totally focused on success of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future