



**Informational Testimony for:
House Bill 1257: Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools – Establishment**

Ways and Means Committee

Position: Informational

February 27, 2024

Strong Schools Maryland wishes to provide the following testimony related to House Bill 1257, Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools – Establishment. Restorative approaches to school discipline, and restorative practices broadly, are a logical complement to the work Maryland is doing to build a statewide World Class Education system under the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. In short, schools thrive when their communities thrive, and school communities thrive when everyone is secure in their sense of belonging to that community.

If Maryland is to succeed in creating that system of World Class Schools, adults in school buildings and at central offices will have to do away with the notion that anyone—student or staff—is disposable. It is incongruent and unfair to expect that educators at the school level will build supportive, restorative cultures in their buildings while being managed by central office and state leaders who may still subscribe to punitive, dominance-centered ways of

In 2018, the state’s Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices produced [a report](#) that recommended many changes that are reflected in this bill. However, the report’s focus on racial equity and cultural competency is not reflected in the bill language. School discipline is inherently an issue about race and culture in our schools, even as we work to diversify the state’s educator workforce.

We believe the bill would benefit from specifying the reporting criteria or detailing the components of the annual December 1 report on implementation.

At present, a fiscal note is not available to help us understand the fiscal impact of the bill as currently drafted. Given the importance of pairing policy with funding in the success of restorative practices in schools, we look forward to that information being made available so we can further articulate our positioning on this timely proposal.

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