

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

POSITION: Support with Amendments

Dear esteemed members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Marvin Price, and I write to you today not just as a constituent, but as a father, a member of the African American community, and an advocate for students with disabilities. I am deeply invested in the welfare and educational journey of my children, particularly considering the challenges they face due to their disabilities.

As an African American male with a visual impairment, navigating the educational landscape has been fraught with obstacles. However, my personal struggles pale in comparison to the challenges my family and I have encountered while advocating for my children within the Baltimore City Public Schools system.

My oldest son, at the tender age of 11, bravely faces both visual impairment and emotional disorders at KIPP in the Walbrook Community. Despite his resilience, the lack of comprehensive support for students with disabilities in his school has hindered his academic and emotional growth. Similarly, my youngest son, a bright 3-year-old, will soon enter Pre-K with a diagnosis of autism. As a parent, witnessing my children navigate a system ill-equipped to accommodate their needs is a heart-wrenching experience.

HB 1257, while well-intentioned in its focus on Restorative Practices Schools, needs to also address staffing shortages in filling these positions so that students with disabilities, such as my sons, can have their needs met within its framework. Without an explicit plan, this is not only a disservice to students like mine but also undermines the fundamental principles of inclusivity and equity in education.

I implore you to consider the following questions as you deliberate on this bill:

1. I'd like to see HB 1257 ensure that these positions are filled so that they have the ability to meet the needs of students with disabilities, particularly those from marginalized communities like mine
2. I would like to see this behavioral health and RP position, explicitly include the unique needs of students with disabilities, such as blindness, ADHD, ADD, and autism.
3. I would like to see the involvement of behavioral health services coordinators and the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports in developing tailored strategies for students with disabilities within Restorative Practices Schools.
4. I would like to see this funding for behavioral health services and restorative practices training is allocated equitably to schools serving students with disabilities.

As an Executive Board member of the Parent and Community Advisory Board (PCAB), representing the Maryland Disabilities Rights community, I urge you to amend HB1257 to explicitly include provisions that address the needs of students with disabilities. Our children deserve an educational environment that not only fosters academic growth but also supports their holistic well-being.

I thank you for your attention to this matter and implore you to consider the profound impact your decisions will have on the lives of students with disabilities across our state.

Sincerely,

Marvin Price Jr.
Executive Board Member
Parent and Community Advisory Board (PCAB)