



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

POSITION: Support with Amendments

The Alliance to Reclaim our Schools (AROS) is a group of parents and educators who deeply understand the need for providing a restorative framework for building school culture and managing conflicts when they arise. Students need adults who understand the needs and stories behind “misbehavior” and who work to create supports and an accountability system that allows students to grow and change.

We know that where Restorative Practices has already been implemented that there has been an uneven approach, due to a lack of funding for designated personnel and a lack of consistent training and coaching. We think this bill would provide the structures needed to allow this work to be successful.

Though we fully support the establishment of Restorative Practices Schools, we propose the following amendments and cautions:

- In order to manage the initiative with fidelity, we need a parent and an RP practitioner in the Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports. This work requires a culture shift, and those who are providing oversight, must have an understanding of the role that families play in all education change work, and the expertise of a professional who has done transformative work in schools
- We need accountability measures that focus on ensuring fidelity to the work and not just accountability around discipline. We believe the accountability should focus on how many circles are conducted and how many conflicts are resolved, rather than solely on a reduction in suspensions. We know that far too often schools have felt pressure to just not suspend, but without embracing the tools that allow for conflict to be an opportunity for learning and repairing harm.
- We hope that part of the year of planning will also be a time to commit seriously to building the pipeline of RP coaches. This will be key to fidelity. In the context of school staffing shortages in all areas, this needs to not be left up to chance.

This work is important. We look forward to doing it right.

Sincerely,
Baltimore City Parents and Educators