

Maryland Senate

February 21, 2025

Bill # SB0783

Regarding: "Public Schools – Student Rights – School investigation and Discipline"

My name is Deborah Dolores Carlson. I am 66 years of age and a lifelong resident of Carroll County Maryland. I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to express my concern about the safety of our youth today while in our Public Schools.

It is our duty and responsibility as residents and adults to provide a safe atmosphere and environment for students while getting an education and while on public school property. Currently, the law states that a student that has been physically attacked has no right to defend themselves with reasonable force without being school charged with the attack as if they were the perpetrator. There is no law requiring an investigation to be done by the school to determine who should be disciplined and/or who is at fault. The student that is beaten on and hurt, unless they can manage to escape, has no choice but to go into a fetal position and try to cover their vital human parts such as head, eyes, spine, etc. If the attacker puts the victim of the bullying into a position of life or death, which happens, and the victim uses reasonable physical force in return to save their own life or from physical bodily injury, that innocent student is penalized with a school charged behavioral record of violence. The same as the bully receives. This also gives no deterrence to the attacker because the attackers know that an innocent student most of the time will not risk getting into trouble and won't fight back. It is unfair for the innocent student to take a beating because the laws and school rules do not protect the innocent students. This is inconceivable to me and to many others in this State. This is dangerous to the life of the victim. Currently, if in case the innocent student is forced to save their own life using reasonable force, they will have problems reaching their future goals when employers and other program acceptances that refer to their school record of behavior.

Our goal should be to supply all students with education, tools, a safe environment and protection from attackers/bullies so they may succeed in the world with for example, military entrance acceptance, productive job interviews, college entry applications, community needs involvement, etc.

Most children today are afraid to go to school for fear of the attacks that happen regularly at Maryland schools. This causes anxiety, depression, a feeling of helplessness, a feeling of being unsafe, and some have feelings/acts of suicide. We can change this fear, anxiety and depression and feelings/acts of suicide. Bill # SB0783 will require Maryland public Schools to investigate each fight/struggle to determine who was a fault. If the investigation determines that one of the students involved used reasonable force to protect themselves and to try to escape the attacker, they will not be disciplined. If it is determined due to the school investigation that both students are equally at fault, both students would be disciplined. Thank you for your time and consideration in this crucial Maryland youth matter.

Sincerely,

Deborah Dolores Carlson

Westminster, Maryland, an 8th generation Carroll County Maryland resident for 66 years/my lifetime.