



Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

January 27, 2025

Senate Bill 68: Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools – Comprehensive Plan

Letter of Support

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA), a professional organization representing about 500 school psychologists in Maryland. We advocate for the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic wellbeing of students and families across the state.

Senate Bill 68 requires Maryland schools to develop a comprehensive plan to implement requirements for the establishment of restorative practices schools. Restorative practices emphasize building relationships, finding ways to connect with the community, and proactively improve school climate and culture. Restorative practices can reduce exclusionary discipline practices that disproportionately impact historically disadvantaged students, such as students with disabilities, BIPOC students, and students from lower SES backgrounds (Losen, Martinez, and Gillespie, 2012)¹. Restorative practices are used across the country to counteract the “school-to-prison pipeline.” Through restorative practices, when engaging in a negative behavior, students are asked to reflect and learn from their behavior, identify the harm they caused others, and repair and rebuild any relationships that were harmed. It is built on the foundation that students need to feel connected to each other and the adults in the school, and when behavior occurs, it is a learning opportunity for the school community. Exclusionary discipline practices do not improve student behavior, and they can damage a student’s connection with the school building (Flannery, 2015)².

Darling-Hammond (2023) used data from 485 middle schools over six years to find that exposure to restorative practices improves students’ academic achievement and reduces suspension rates and disparities. Students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds benefited from the program, with BIPOC students benefiting the most. We know that all Maryland students deserve to learn in an environment where they feel safe and connected, where they can learn. Restorative practices written into school plans and implemented with fidelity will help Maryland schools achieve this ideal for all students.

MSPA supports Senate Bill 68, including the development of a comprehensive plan to implement restorative practices in Maryland public schools. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please contact us at legislative@mspaonline.org or Sarah Peters at speters@hbsstrategies.us or 410-322-2320.

Respectfully submitted,

Chair, Legislative Committee
Maryland School Psychologists’ Association

¹ Losen, Daniel J., Tia Martinez, and Jon Gillespie, *Suspended Education in California*, Los Angeles, Calif.: The Center for Civil Rights Remedies at the UCLA Civil Rights Project, April 10, 2012. As of January 24, 2025:
<https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-remedies/school-to-prison-folder/summary-reports/suspended-education-in-california/Suspen>