

Support of SB 68

Uploaded by: Akilah Alleyne

Position: FAV

TO: Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

BILL: Senate Bill (SB) 68 – Public High Schools – Restorative Practices Schools - Comprehensive Plan

DATE: January 29, 2025

POSITION: Support

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) are providing this testimony in support of Senate Bill (SB) 68 – Public High Schools – Restorative Practices Schools – Comprehensive Plan which requires MSDE to develop a comprehensive plan by July 1, 2026, for the establishment of Restorative Practices Schools.

SB 68 mandates that MSDE create a comprehensive plan for implementing Restorative Practices Schools. The bill defines “restorative practices” and outlines requirements for the plan, including establishing training materials and identifying performance metrics. County boards of education are required to use the comprehensive plan when establishing such schools. The bill also includes reporting requirements for the Department, detailing data collection on student discipline and the use of restorative practices.

The proposed legislation emphasizes the importance of building strong relationships, setting clear expectations, and focusing on repairing harm when violations occur. It also seeks to move from a framework of punishment and traditional discipline towards a model that prioritizes relationships, accountability, and community well-being, and aims to foster student well-being and positive school climates. This approach, which includes elements like conflict resolution, mediation, and social-emotional learning, has the potential to reduce disciplinary actions like suspensions and expulsions and create a more positive school climate.

Currently, many schools rely on punitive measures that often fail to address the root causes of student misbehavior. Senate Bill 68 seeks to change this by emphasizing a relationship-focused, preventative approach through restorative practices. The bill defines "restorative practices" as a model that is communally and culturally responsive, and that focuses on building relationships and setting clear behavioral expectations. When these expectations are not met, the focus is on accountability for harm done, as well as repairing the relationships that were affected.

The bill specifies that restorative practices can include conflict resolution, mediation, peer mediation, circle processes, restorative conferences, social-emotional learning, trauma-informed care, and positive behavioral intervention support. These are all evidence-based methods of addressing behavior that will lead to more positive and productive outcomes in schools. These practices are intended to be integrated into the daily activities of the whole school.

Senate Bill 68 mandates the State Department of Education to develop a comprehensive plan for establishing Restorative Practices Schools by July 1, 2026. This plan will provide a framework for local school systems that choose to adopt this model. The plan will include:

- A framework for identifying school personnel to serve as restorative practice coaches.
- Model training materials for those coaches to train other staff.
- Standards for when a school may be designated a Restorative Practices School.
- Intended outcomes and performance metrics, including improvements in student conduct, absenteeism, teacher turnover, mental health, and school climate.

The bill also emphasizes that the primary purpose of any disciplinary measure should be rehabilitative, restorative, and educational. By focusing on repairing harm and strengthening relationships, rather than simply punishing students, we can create a more supportive and nurturing environment for all students and staff. This is supported by the fact that the bill requires the State Department of Education to provide technical assistance to county boards regarding the use of restorative practices.

Senate Bill 68 requires the Department to collect and report data on the use of restorative practices and alternative discipline measures. The discipline data will be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, disability status, socioeconomic status, and English language proficiency. This is important to ensure that these programs serve all students equitably.

In implementing SB 68, MSDE will support schools seeking to transform school culture. Restorative Practices are designed to create learning environments where students feel safe, respected, and connected. It is about investing in students and their futures. We know that strong relationships are the foundation for successful learning and that a focus on restorative practices will improve school climate and student well-being.

MSDE respectfully requests consideration of these comments as SB 68 is discussed and deliberated. For further information, please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne at 410-767-0504, or Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov.

SB68 Restorative Practices One-Pager.pdf

Uploaded by: Benjamin Brooks

Position: FAV

What Are Restorative Practices?



A restorative practice relies on the basic notion that people are connected through a web of relationships and when harm occurs between people, the web of relationships which creates a community is torn.



These practices have been proven to dramatically improve school culture and climate resulting in declines in student suspensions, expulsions, arrests, office referrals, and chronic absence, as well as improved academic performance, and teacher retention, thus, strengthening the tenets of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

Barriers in Public Schools

From 2020-2023, the number of students who withdrew from Maryland public schools and whose "whereabouts [were] unknown" rose from 7,203 to 9,981, a 38% increase.

The four year cohort dropout rate increased to 8.5% from 7.4%. Moreover in 2022, Black students have a 8.5% dropout rate while Hispanic students have a 19.8% dropout rate.

The Regional Mid-Atlantic conducted a study from 2009-2018 on disciplinary removal rates in Maryland schools. They found that Black students and students with disabilities continued to be suspended and expelled at more than twice the rate of other students, even when incidents involved the same type of infraction.

It is of the utmost importance to reverse these trends in our schools by changing the way we engage and help students.



Restorative Practices Work

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Johns Hopkins analysis of the first 15 Baltimore City schools that implemented restorative practices school wide found several positive impacts on the school community:

44% *Decline in school suspensions in the first year.*

72% *Of school staff reported an improved school climate.*

69% *Of school staff reported an improved student respect for one another.*

Studies conducted in Pittsburgh, Oakland, Denver, Dallas, and other cities around that country have found that restorative practices result in the improvement of student attendance, performance, a stronger school community.

Why SB 68 is Needed

SB 68 aims to create a plan for "restorative practices schools" which county boards of education have the option to adopt when establishing these kinds of schools. Ultimately, the aim is to improve relations between teachers, students, and school administrators and provide a healthy learning environment for students.



Starting the Plan

The bill redefines the term "restorative approaches" with "restorative practices" & build a comprehensive plan for what a restorative school looks like.



A Plan for Success

The plan will outline how a restorative school trains its staff and what metrics a restorative school would use to determine success.



Consultation

The State Department of Education to consult educators and administrators who have established and operated restorative practice schools & establish model training materials.



A Framework for Schools

The outcome of SB 68 would be a plan that provides local county boards the framework they need to implement restorative practices schools, should they elect to do so.

SB68_Brooks.pdf

Uploaded by: Benjamin Brooks

Position: FAV

BENJAMIN BROOKS
Legislative District 10
Baltimore County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee
Energy Subcommittee

Chair, Joint Electric Universal
Service Program Workgroup



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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 68
Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools – Comprehensive Plan

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
January 29, 2024

Chair Feldman, Vice-chair Kagan, members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on SB 68 Public Schools - Restorative Practices Schools - Comprehensive Plan. The bill has three main objectives: 1) redefines the term “restorative approaches” with “restorative practices”; 2) mandates the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to create a comprehensive plan and 3) establishes that if local school boards decide to implement restorative practices, they must use the plan that was established by the state.

A restorative school program is a school-wide effort to create a positive, relationship-focused learning environment which promotes respect, community, responsibility, accountability, and empowerment among students and staff. It is not a mental health, discipline, attendance, human resources, instructional, or curriculum program. Instead, restorative practices are a proactive method to conflict resolution which have been shown to improve school climate and narrow disparities between students of all backgrounds.

Maryland public schools are afflicted with a variety of problems from rising truancy to falling graduation rates and conflicts between students and teachers. Improving student wellbeing and student-teacher relations has been a priority for the State since the Blueprint for Maryland's Future was enacted in 2021. In this legislation, the Blueprint established the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports (MCCCS) to focus on meeting student behavior health needs in a holistic, non-stigmatized, and coordinated manner. The Consortium was tasked with developing best practices for the creation of a positive classroom for all students. Additionally, schools were also required to appoint mental health services coordinators within each school to provide these services and ensure the competence of trained staff.

SB 68 builds off the work of MSDE by building a foundational framework for determining what a restorative school looks like, how it trains its staff, and what metrics a restorative school would use to determine success. In its development, MSDE would consult educators and administrators who have established and operated restorative practice schools, establish model

training materials and develop the intended outcomes and performance metrics that the use of restorative practices are designed to achieve. Further, SB 68 provides the local county boards the framework they need to implement restorative practices schools, should they elect to do so.

Restorative practices schools are not new to Maryland; there are a number of which already in place. A Johns Hopkins analysis of the 15 Baltimore City schools using restorative practices found suspensions were reduced by 44% in the program's first year. After five years of restorative practices, school arrests were reduced by 81% - indicating a reduction in violent behavior and a major step towards closing the school-to-prison pipeline. A nationwide study by the RAND Corporation corroborated these results, finding that students in restorative schools were suspended less frequently, suspended for shorter durations, less likely to be suspended multiple times, and referred fewer students to alternative schools compared to non-restorative schools. RAND also found that restorative schools narrowed the disparity in suspensions of Black, Latino, low-income, and students with disabilities, who are suspended at more than twice the rate of their peers in non-restorative schools. These findings are indicative of the impact restorative practices have on students' conduct and the learning environment. Restorative schools reduce the likelihood of dysfunctional behavior and in turn, improve students' and teachers' perceptions of school safety and learning.

Restorative practices do not just improve conduct-- they also foster a positive classroom culture and strengthen educators' connections with their students. Baltimore City Public Schools found that restorative practices improved educators' perceptions of teaching, improved the classroom climate, and increased the respect students gave to all members of the classroom community. In Baltimore City, 72% of school staff reported an improvement in school climate and 69% reported an improvement in students' respect for one another after integrating restorative practices.

SB68 provides the framework to implement Restorative Practices, as a whole, with the creation of a comprehensive plan that would provide a statewide model. For these reasons, I am requesting a favorable report on SB68.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin T. Brooks".

Benjamin Brooks

SB 68

Uploaded by: Ebony Battle

Position: FAV



For more information, please contact
Ebony Battle
ebattle1@umaryland.edu

February 4, 2024

Ebony Battle
Towson, 21286

TESTIMONY ON SB0068- POSITION: FAVORABLE
Education, Energy, and the Environment-Restorative Practices Schools
- Comprehensive Plan

TO: TO: Chair Korman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

My name is Ebony Battle. I am a resident of Baltimore County. I am submitting this testimony in support of restorative practice. As a graduate student, I facilitate weekly restorative circles with Baltimore City Public School students. Additionally, I also facilitate talking circles with Indigenous LGBTQIA+ teens at a local community center. These experiences in circle with students has shown me how vital it is to uphold and grow restorative practices as they were intended.

Community settings build healing practices. Camaraderie is a vital aspect of talking circles. Healing circles are a traditional Native American practice that engages the community in discussions that allow them to heal and learn from each other. I am troubled by the language that focuses on disciplinary actions rather than community building. Schools already utilize disciplinary actions daily. To extend these practices isn't needed. It can also have vast consequences for marginalized students. It fuels the school-to-prison pipeline and colonizes indigenous traditions. Maryland already has an oppressive history with the natives who occupied this land.

I facilitated a group of middle school students at City Springs Elementary School this fall. The class had a complex discussion about race and policing in the student community, and the students were able to share their personal stories. I watched their confidence rise as we discussed what it was like navigating the world with a marginalized identity.

There are stark differences between facilitating in a public school and a local organization. School systems often punish students when they should focus on reflection and growth, ultimately improving their learning environment and well-being. This bill echoes these priorities.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.

Emotional healing is a necessary component of learning.¹ Restorative Practices promote neuroplasticity and student learning, allowing growing minds to retain knowledge and engage with information in a more rigorous way.² Discussing enriching topics with students in public schools can be challenging, and you can feel the remnants of certain disciplinary practices. Some priorities outlined in this bill do not complement the restorative model and should be revised.

I am in support of Restorative Practice. This bill should be amended to stay true to restorative circles and practices. MSDE should consult restorative practitioners to ensure that the plan they create and implement is culturally responsive. In restorative circles, punitive action shouldn't be and is not the focal point. All language pertaining to discipline should be rewritten to center social relationship building. Failure to abide by the standards of conduct shouldn't be met with consequences; rather, it should be an opportunity to build student and adult capacity to problem-solve collaboratively. Most importantly, everyone, including staff members, should follow and support the restorative model. With fidelity, these practices can promote a safe and healthy learning environment for all faculty and students. I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0197.

¹ Wachtel, Joshua. 2013. "Guest Blog: Dr. Susan Leigh Deppe: Understanding Emotion in Restorative Practices.News." Iirp.edu. October 29. <https://www.iirp.edu/news/guest-blog-dr-susan-leigh-deppe-understanding-emotion-in-restorative-practices>.

² Alvarez, Carlos A. 2023. "The Neurobiology of Restorative Practices." Georgia Southern Commons. <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/secsc/2023/2023/22/>.

SB68 Testimony- J Scott.pdf

Uploaded by: Julius Scott

Position: FAV

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Senate Bill 68: Public Schools- Restorative Practices Schools- Establishment
DATE: January 29, 2025

Written Testimony by Julius Scott, MSW student Salisbury University, personnel coordinator The Choice Program at UMBC, and Restorative Practices certified practitioner.

I fully support SB68, which would implement the requirements to create Restorative Practices in public schools in Maryland. Time after time I have witnessed the passing of laws that create a detrimental backslide in the fight for child welfare in this state. Humans are hardwired to act on emotion when faced with a difficult situation, especially at ages when our brains are not fully developed. Yet, the state holds our children to a standard where they need to be perfect, and if they make a mistake as a result of their lack of emotional regulation they are penalized and labeled as delinquents. A label that will follow them in every aspect of their young lives.

Restorative practices have been proven to be an effective solution to this lack of emotional regulation and many other challenges that students face daily. I have worked with youth in multiple settings, including a juvenile detention center run by the Department of Juvenile Services, an elementary/middle school in the middle of West Baltimore, and as a mentor to young people under the care and supervision of the Department of Juvenile Services in communities all around Baltimore City. In 2024, I became a certified practitioner of restorative practices by the International Institute of Restorative Practices. During my work, I have noticed that when discussing the topics of behavior, academic performance, and attendance, conflict arises as a common theme. I have seen conflict arise in a multitude of ways. Everything from a familial/community dispute to someone posting the wrong thing on Instagram. No matter the origin of the conflict, it could have been solved peacefully if staff were trained in restorative practices. Sadly, in many situations, they are not and it creates an unsafe environment for all parties involved. An environment that is not conducive to efficient academic performance. Schools may use restorative practices as a tool for relationship and community-building before negative emotions run high.

When students do not feel safe, they will not be successful. All around Maryland, schools are the focal point of youth conflict that in many instances unfortunately leads to life-altering consequences. Restorative practices can and will be the solution to this issue. It allows students to build community and repair relationships within their peer group. Disciplinary issues and conflict will be combated by non-punitive responses that get to the root of the harm, support

accountability for offenders, and promote healing for victims. Also, when a student re-enters the school community after suspension, truancy, or incarceration a plan is developed that aims to foster wrap-around support and academic achievement. Ultimately, restorative practices are a preventative and proactive approach that should be implemented across the state of Maryland, so I must once again emphasize the importance of voting in favor of SB68.

SB 68

Uploaded by: Kristina Curley

Position: FAV



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TO: Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Members
FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus
DATE: January 29, 2025
RE: SB68 – Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools –
Comprehensive Plan

The MLLC supports SB68 – Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools – Comprehensive Plan

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of SB68.

This legislation is pertinent to the Latino community in Maryland because restorative schools have the potential to close existing disparities between Latino students and other groups. Currently, Maryland's student population is 22% Hispanic/Latino students. Specifically, 17.2% of students in Baltimore City are Latino, 15.3% in Baltimore County, 39.3% in Prince George's County, and 34.6% in Montgomery County. However, there is a large gap in graduation rates between Latino students and other groups. According to the Maryland State Department of Education, the number of Hispanic students who graduated dropped from 76% to 72.3% from 2021 to 2022. In comparison, White students had a graduation rate of 93.5%, Black students had a graduation rate of 84%, and Asian students had a graduation rate 96.5% in 2022. There are likely many causes for this disparity, but SB68 seeks to fix the ones stemming from student suspensions, expulsions, arrests, office referrals, and chronic absence.

Restorative practices have shown promising results, as evidenced by a Johns Hopkins analysis of the first 15 Baltimore City schools that implemented the model, which reported a 44% decrease in school suspensions in the first year. Additionally, a separate study of school resource officers found an 81% reduction in school arrests over a five-year period.¹ By creating a plan for restorative practices schools, SB68 lays the groundwork for transforming Maryland schools.

This bill directs the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop a comprehensive plan for establishing "Restorative Practice Schools", which integrate restorative practices into the daily activities and operations of the entire school. Restorative practices include conflict resolution, mediation, trauma-informed care, and social-emotional learning. The bill requires county boards to adopt this plan if they choose to implement a restorative practice

¹ [Background provided by Senator Brooks Office](#)

model. By establishing a restorative justice model in public schools across the state, SB68 is an important step to reduce suspensions, expulsions, arrests, office referrals, and chronic absence, specifically among Latino students.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on SB68.

SB 68

Uploaded by: Ronza Othman

Position: FAV

Subject: Favorable SB0068: Restorative Practices in Schools

Date: January 29, 2025

From: National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

15 Charles Plaza, #3002

President@nfbmd.org

To: Senate Education and Environment Committee

The Members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the Senate Education Environment and Energy Committee to give SB0068 a favorable report.

SB0068 calls upon the State Department of Education to develop a restorative practice plan. This plan will offer alternatives to suspensions and other disciplinary procedures. A school that uses restorative practices will emphasize conflict resolution and other opportunities to help a student make better choices about behavior. Statistics show that students with disabilities make up a large part of suspensions and expulsions in a school. The restorative practices plan is the beginning of changing these statistics. All students need a positive environment that emphasizes discussion of a problem and meaningful conflict resolution and a rewards system when their behavior improves.

Please vote Yes on SB0068. Give students the opportunity to get an equitable education. Because of this bill, the school administration can be creative in solving truancy and other difficult problems.

For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.

SB 68

Uploaded by: Ufuoma Agarín

Position: FAV



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January 29, 2025

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Chairman Brian J. Feldman
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

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

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers its strong and favorable support for **Senate Bill 68 (SB68) – Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools – Comprehensive Plan. The bill is a Black Caucus' 2025 legislative priority** and introduces essential reforms to Maryland's student discipline system by requiring the Maryland State Department of Education to develop a comprehensive plan for the establishment of Restorative Practices Schools.

Restorative practices provide an alternative to traditional, punitive forms of discipline by focusing on repairing harm, building stronger relationships, and promoting accountability within the school community. For Black children in Maryland, who are often overrepresented in school discipline data, restorative practices offer a more inclusive and supportive approach that can break the cycle of exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions. Research consistently shows that Black students are more likely to face severe disciplinary actions for similar behaviors when compared to their White peers, which contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline and exacerbates educational disparities. Senate Bill 68 represents an important opportunity to address these systemic issues by integrating restorative practices into the core of our school culture.

By requiring the Maryland State Department of Education to create a comprehensive plan for Restorative Practices Schools, Senate Bill 68 ensures that these practices are not just an optional initiative but a systemic shift in how we approach student behavior and discipline across Maryland. The bill mandates the development of a framework that will train school personnel as Restorative Practices Coaches and provide model training materials to integrate these practices schoolwide. For Black children in particular, this means that their needs for support, understanding, and healing will be prioritized over punitive measures. The bill also establishes clear metrics for success, including reductions in disciplinary actions, absenteeism, and teacher turnover—areas where

Black students are often disproportionately affected.

Moreover, the bill's emphasis on training school staff and administrators in restorative practices ensures that Black children in Maryland schools will have a better chance of receiving the understanding and support they need when they make mistakes.

Restorative practices help build stronger connections between students and educators, helping to address underlying issues like trauma or unmet social-emotional needs—

issues that disproportionately affect Black children due to historical and ongoing social inequalities. By fostering an environment where students feel heard, respected, and valued, we can create safer, more equitable schools for Black students, who are often subjected to racial biases in traditional discipline processes.

For instance, national studies have shown that Black children face higher rates of suspension and expulsion for subjective offenses, such as “disruption” or “insubordination,” which are open to interpretation and often influenced by unconscious bias. This bill offers an important opportunity to change the narrative for Black students in Maryland. By prioritizing restorative approaches over traditional discipline methods, we can ensure that Black students are not pushed out of schools but instead remain engaged in learning and personal growth.

Additionally, Senate Bill 68’s mandate to track key data, such as student conduct, absenteeism, and school climate indicators, provides a powerful tool for monitoring the bill's effectiveness and ensuring that progress is being made toward equitable outcomes. This data will allow policymakers and educators to identify and address any remaining disparities, ensuring that Black students are not left behind.

The Black Caucus believes that this bill offers a critical pathway to reforming Maryland’s student discipline system in a way that promotes equity, inclusivity, and fairness for all students, particularly Black children, who have long been subject to disparate treatment in schools. For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland strongly supports Senate Bill 68.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland

HB197.pdf

Uploaded by: Donna Culberson

Position: UNF

DONNA CULBERSON
1616 Doctor Jack Rd
Conowingo, MD 21918

Date: 01/27/2025

Subject: HB0197

As a concerned citizen, a grandparent of a Cecil County Public School student and as a County Council member for Cecil County, I am asking for an UNFAVORABLE position on HB197.

The State should not be dictating what is and is not appropriate for local educational systems when it comes to discipline within the classrooms. The systems that have been forced upon local districts by the State are NOT working.

Classrooms are experiencing a drastic increase in behavior issues which are permitted to go unchecked. Teachers are unable to maintain order in classrooms and receive little to no help from the administration. Students have learned they will face no repercussions for their disruptive behavior therefore it continues from day to day. The disruptive students have no concerns about how their behavior impacts the rest of the class.

Meanwhile, the students who are in the classroom to learn are being forced to go to the library or a safe, quiet space to do their assignments. This is unacceptable.

Educators are not in the classroom to be full-time disciplinarians. They are there to teach and address minor, occasional infractions by a student. They were not trained as psychologists. They are not parents to their students. They do not deserve to have objects thrown at them, students hitting or kicking them, and they do not deserve to have students spitting on them.

STOP this insanity. Restorative Practices do not work as intended. Restore order to classrooms. Provide consequences to students who misbehave. Involve parents in the disciplinary process.

For these reasons, I request an UNFAVORABLE position on HB197.