



Maryland Youth Advisory Council

c/o Governor's Office Children
100 Community Place,
Crownsville, MD 21032

Alex Hossainkhail, *Chair*

Thomas Evans, *Vice-Chair*
Folashade Epebinu, *Secretary*

February 27, 2025

Re: HB 1132 | Public Schools - Student Fights - School Investigation and Discipline

Dear Chair Atterbeary and members of the Ways and Means Committee,

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council prides itself on being a coalition of diverse young advocates and leaders who serve as a voice for youth in the state of Maryland. As leaders in our communities, and as appointees of the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Maryland Association of Student Councils, Maryland Higher Education Commission, and the University System of Maryland, we take every opportunity to address relevant issues by influencing legislation, spreading public awareness and serving as a liaison between youth and policymakers regarding issues facing youth.

HB 1132 requires a principal or school administration to investigate every student fight or physical struggle and ensures student rights. This includes prohibiting a school employee from disciplining a student who most probably used reasonable force to protect themselves, and ensures an administrator can expunge documentation from a student's disciplinary record under certain circumstances.

In 2019, just six years ago, a survey concluded that around 12% of students had been in a physical fight on school property,¹ and this number has since increased. **HB 1132** would ensure that these physical altercations would be resolved cordially, where those who are victims can receive proper aid and treatment. The high physical violence statistic could lower drastically if every individual safety concern was examined and investigated.

Montgomery County, Maryland's most populated county, sustained 160,554 students in their public school system (Montgomery County Public Schools) in 2023.² Of these students, there were 1,859 cases

¹ CDC. "High School YRBS - Maryland 2019 Results." Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019, <https://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/app/Results.aspx?TT=A&OUT=0&SID=HS&QID=QQ&LID=MD&YID=2019&LID2=&YID2=&COL=S&ROW1=N&ROW2=N&HT=QQ&LCT=LL&FS=S1&FR=R1&FG=G1&FA=A1&FI=I1&FP=P1&FSL=S1&FRL=R1&FGL=G1&FAL=A1&FIL=I1&FPL=P1&PV=&TST=False&C1=&C2=&QP=G&DP=1&VA=CI&CS=Y>. Accessed 27 February 2025.

²George, Donna St. "School year opens in Maryland with enrollment surge in Montgomery County." The Washington Post, 5 September 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/school-year-opens-in-maryland-with-enrollment-surge-in-montgomery-county/2017/09/04/ef72a664-8f24-11e7-84c0-02cc069f2c37_story.html. Accessed 27 February 2025.

of suspensions for fighting, threats, and attacks,³ some of them being justified defense while others were not. **HB 1132** would ensure that all students receive proper and just treatment in regards to physical altercations and safety concerns, hence reducing the number of suspensions and disciplinary actions taken.

Students rely on their schools, which are integral to their everyday lives, to be places of safety and security. Yet today, this is not the case, and hundreds, even thousands of students feel unsafe when attending school. With the passage of **HB 1132**, such mentalities and feelings towards school safety will have more positive connotations, where more and more students will feel secure and *want* to go to school.

The Council has voted in **favor** of endorsing **HB 1132**, as it aligns with the Council's Legislative Platform supporting:

- a. Proactive measures to ensure student and school personnel safety and to prevent school violence and vandalism. (Article 5, Clause A)
- b. Alternative educational and community service programs for students facing expulsion or other severe disciplinary actions. (Article 5, Clause D)
- c. Publication and enforcement of disciplinary procedures in schools. (Article 5, Clause F)

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council is proud to support **HB1132**, as it aligns with our Legislative Platform priorities, particularly Priority #3: Safe School and Community Spaces, which emphasizes the necessity for safe youth environments. By ensuring that school administration pays copious amounts of attention to school safety incidents, students will have the proper environment to focus on their personal learning, growth, and development; creating better academic performance and well-being, both physically and mentally. Youth will attend school without the fear of a safety threat—a feat Maryland should strive to achieve in the wake of increased rates of violent incidents across the nation.

This is a necessary step in maintaining and enhancing school safety, improving educational environments for students and staff throughout the state. For these reasons, the Council supports **HB 1132** and respectfully requests a favorable report from the committee. We thank you for considering this essential legislation.

Sincerely,



Alex Hossainkhail, Chair
Maryland Youth Advisory Council

³ Broom, Scott. "Suspensions for fighting in Montgomery County Schools up in most recent year reported." WUSA9, 12 March 2024, [https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/local/maryland/suspensions-fighting-montgomery-county-schools/65-20ef7db9-132c-4239-b875-78c06da358d6#:~:text=In%20the%202021%2D2022%20school,for%20Montgomery%20County%20Public%20Schools](https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/local/maryland/suspensions-fighting-montgomery-county-schools/65-20ef7db9-132c-4239-b875-78c06da358d6#:~:text=In%20the%202021%2D2022%20school,for%20Montgomery%20County%20Public%20Schools.). Accessed 27 February 2025.