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# MARYLAND COALITION TO REFORM SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

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**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment**  
**SB 68: Public Schools- Restorative Practices Schools- Establishment**  
**DATE: March 19, 2025**

**POSITION: Favorable**

The Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline (CRSD) brings together advocates, service providers, and community members dedicated to transforming school discipline practices within Maryland's public school systems. CRSD is committed to the fair and equitable treatment of ALL students regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and socio-economic status, and reducing barriers to learning for ALL students. CRSD has been a vocal advocate of Restorative Practices and decreasing our state's dependence on punitive discipline for the last 10 years. **CRSD strongly supports SB 68's goal of helping schools become Restorative Communities.**

**Restorative Practices are an effective way to build positive school cultures that are healthy, safe, and inclusive.** The 2018 Maryland Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices recommended that the state "support all schools in adopting restorative approaches for creating and sustaining positive learning communities"<sup>1</sup>. Restorative Practices are evidence-based school-wide strategies that help teachers and administrators create safe and inclusive school communities and, if needed, resolve conflict.

**Restorative Practices make schools safer for everyone.**

**CRSD supports requiring that Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) develop a plan to guide the implementation of Restorative Practice .** We support the creation of a shared definition, consistent reporting standards, the creation of a plan to increase the use of Restorative Practices throughout the state, and strategies that develop a restorative culture among adults at all levels of the school system. Data should also be collected across a broad spectrum of school outcomes, including staff retention, parent involvement, and all stakeholders' positive feelings of safety about their school community.

**CRSD recommends that MSDE assemble a group of Restorative Practices Practitioners from throughout the state who have experience implementing Restorative Practices to assist in the creation of the plan.** There are many reasons to include practitioners in developing the plan. Restorative Practices should be life-affirming and responsive to the needs of ALL members of the school community, especially Black students, Latina students, multilingual learners, other students of color, and students who identify as LGBTQ+. It should also include the expectations and work environment for school staff. The training for Restorative Practices must help teachers and school staff become aware of their own biases and what strategies to use to mitigate them. Many studies have shown that racial bias is prevalent among teachers and school staff.<sup>2</sup> One study reported that of the tens of thousands of teachers and school

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<sup>1</sup> <https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5300/sc5339/000113/023600/023694/20190078e.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Starck, Jordan, et al. Teachers are people too: May 2020. Examining the Racial Bias of Teachers Compared to Other American Adults. Educational Researcher.

staff surveyed, 30% of respondents expressed explicit pro-white/anti-Black bias, and 77% expressed implicit pro-white/anti-Black bias. Studies have shown that implicit racial and ethnic biases are associated with lower expectations of students, unfair discipline practices, lower quality instruction, and less attention to fostering positive social environments<sup>3</sup>. Further, beyond resolving disputes among students, Restorative Practices must also be about creating a social environment where students can learn about each other's lived experiences and culture, and how to empathize and develop positive relationships with each other. And the practice must be about helping all children to critically think about their place in the world and help them develop strong identities and self-worth to ameliorate the negative societal messages that they often internalize. If school staff is not trained in culturally responsive practice, students' behavior can be misinterpreted and underlying personal, interpersonal, and institutional causes can go unaddressed. **Creating a workgroup that includes restorative practice** practitioners will ensure the plan is research-based and includes the input of those with implementation experience.

**CRSD supports the expansion of Restorative Practices in Maryland Schools, and requests that you pass SB 68.**

For more information contact:  
Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline  
[CRSDMaryland@gmail.com](mailto:CRSDMaryland@gmail.com)

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[https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/0013189X20912758?casa\\_token=Y2RAU9sDmvgAAAAA:ncmagk0D8VVLBg5x9hJ6WfVI\\_Qgk9nrWqxUUMFwp4myKTmlU4mQ1YGGz3t-GgDNYLTjwAJsxkKpQ](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/0013189X20912758?casa_token=Y2RAU9sDmvgAAAAA:ncmagk0D8VVLBg5x9hJ6WfVI_Qgk9nrWqxUUMFwp4myKTmlU4mQ1YGGz3t-GgDNYLTjwAJsxkKpQ)

<sup>3</sup> Teachers are people too: Racial bias among American educators. July 2020. The Brookings Institution.  
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/teachers-are-people-too-racial-bias-among-american-educators/#:~:text=Our%20most%20precise%20raw%20estimates,white%2Fanti%2DBlack%20bias.>