

Dear Chair Brian Feldman and other members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

My name is Benjamin Grimaldi and I am giving testimony on behalf of the Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City today. The Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City is a student-led group in Baltimore City that advocates on behalf of students. ASCBC receives advice from students on important issues and advocates for the students interests.

Senate Bill 68, on Restorative Practice Schools will allow for the State Department of Education to establish a comprehensive plan for Restorative Practices Schools for counties to then be able to create restorative practices schools. ASCBC supports this bill because it will support students with two of their most important priorities: improving mental health and establishing safer schools.

A study by the learning policy institute¹ found that schools that used restorative practices were much safer. It found that restorative practices led to less students pursuing dangerous activities and being able to acquire higher academic achievements. Restorative practices schools are safer because the disciplinary practices used at restorative practice schools are more effective than those used at non-restorative practices schools.

Restorative Practice schools increase school safety, and decrease the amount of students participating in dangerous activities. This will also likely lead to improved student mental health as a result of the improved environment that students will now possess. The improval in the environment does not just affect mental health, the study also showed that it led to higher academic achievement and improved student behavior. It found that student suspensions and their durations were decreased at restorative practice schools as opposed to schools without restorative practices. It also found that restorative practice schools help decrease racial inequality caused by suspensions and disciplinary action.

Overall, restorative practice schools will increase student mental health, their environment, and the safety of their schools. These are issues Baltimore City Schools students hold close to their hearts as shown by student feedback last year. The associated student congress of Baltimore City believes that senate bill 68, on restorative practice schools, will address important concerns students hold.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Grimaldi, and The Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City.

¹ Darling-Hammond, Sean. *Fostering Belonging, Transforming Schools: The Impact of Restorative Practices*. May 2023.