



# **RACIAL EQUITY IMPACT NOTE**

DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES  
MARYLAND ▪ GENERAL ▪ ASSEMBLY

2026 Session  
HB0198

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## **School Systems - Reportable Offenses - Notification of Student as Suspect**

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### **Bill Summary**

This bill requires that a law enforcement agency notify the State's Attorney when a student is a suspect in an investigation of an act that, if committed by an adult, would be a felony or crime of violence, as specified, and makes conforming changes to reporting requirements related to reportable offenses.

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### **Racial Equity Impact Statement**

Black students are disproportionately arrested for reportable offenses and also disproportionately subjected to suspensions and expulsions as compared to their peers. The bill requires that law enforcement officers notify the State's Attorney of a student who is a suspect in a specified violent crime, potentially resulting in a notification to school officials at the State's Attorney's discretion. The bill also requires that law enforcement officers notify the State's Attorney if a student is no longer a suspect so that the State's Attorney may notify school officials accordingly. While this requirement would benefit the overall public safety of students, the equity impacts in these cases would depend heavily on how the bill is implemented. More data regarding the number of suspects triggering the bill's requirements, the length of any school program disruption as a result of a report, and the portion of students eventually arrested for the reported offense would be required to measure the actual impacts.

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### **Analysis**

Generally, the bill makes changes to notification processes for when a student is identified as a suspect in the investigation of certain reportable offenses.

If a student is the suspect in an investigation of an act that if committed by an adult would be a felony or a crime of violence, the law enforcement agency conducting the investigation *must* notify the State's Attorney within 24 hours of the student being identified as a suspect, as practicable. The State's Attorney may notify the local superintendent or the superintendent's designee within 24 hours of the notification, as practicable. If the law enforcement agency, after providing notice to the State's Attorney, determines that the student is no longer a suspect, the law enforcement agency must notify the State's Attorney that the student is no longer a suspect within 24 hours of making that determination. Similarly, if the State's Attorney has notified the local superintendent of a student's identification as a suspect, the State's Attorney must notify the local superintendent that the student is no longer a suspect.

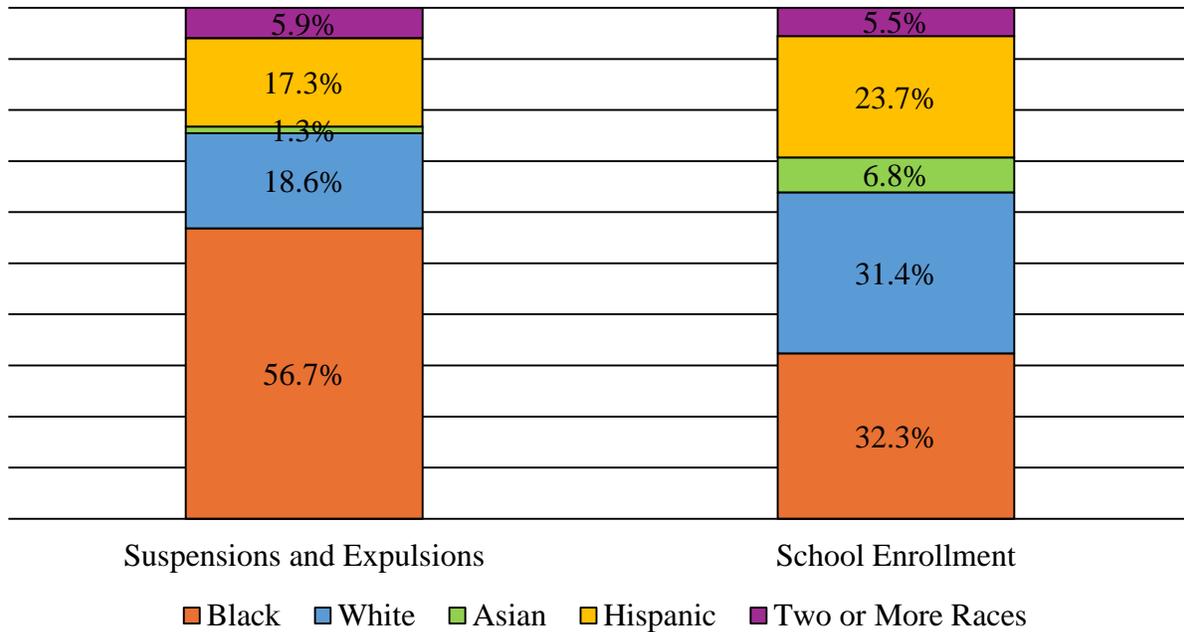
### *Reportable Offenses*

Under existing law, a reportable offense is an offense that (1) occurred off school premises; (2) did not occur at an event sponsored by the school; and (3) includes a crime of violence, as specified in current law, and numerous other specified weapons, drug, assault, and theft related offenses. When a student is arrested for a reportable offense or an offense related to the student's membership in a criminal organization, the law enforcement agency making the arrest must notify (1) the local superintendent; (2) the school principal; and (3) if appropriate, the school security officer. The law enforcement agency may also notify the State's Attorney.

### *Impacts of the Bill*

Maryland State Department of Education data shows that Black students are overrepresented in both school disciplinary activity as well as arrests for reportable offenses. **Exhibit 1** shows out-of-school suspensions and expulsions by race and ethnicity for the 2024-2025 school year compared to each group's share of the State's public school enrollment during that year. Black students make up the largest share of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions at 57% despite making up only 32% of total students.

**Exhibit 1**  
**Out-of-school Suspensions and Expulsions for Major Offenses**  
**Compared to School Enrollment**  
**2024-2025 School Year**

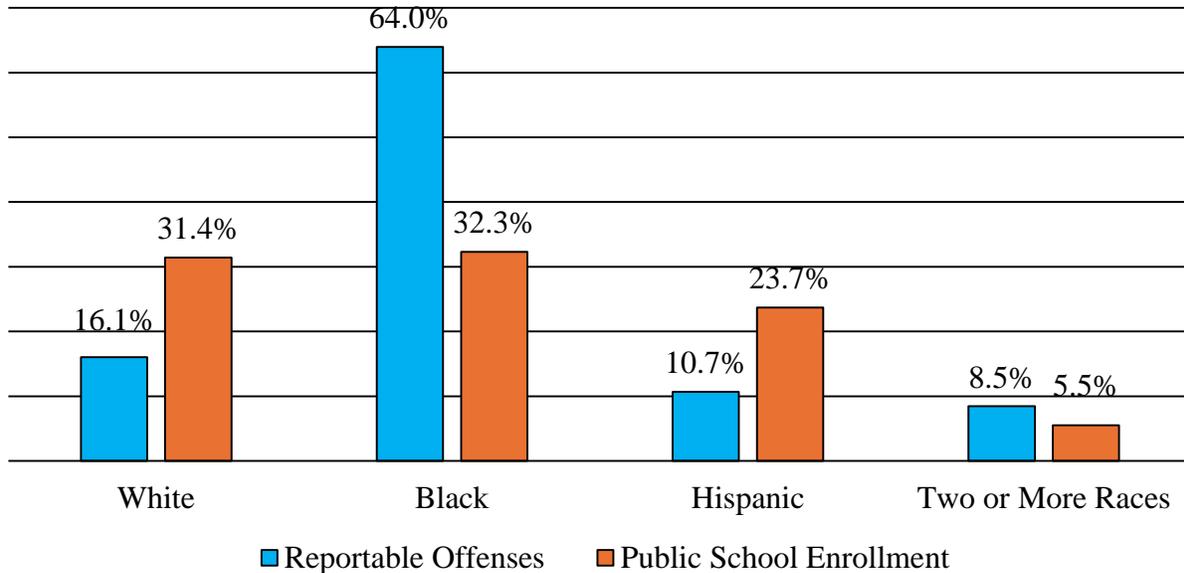


Source: Maryland Department of Education

**Exhibit 2** shows the racial and ethnic breakdowns for reportable offense incidents compared to each group’s share of public school enrollment as of September 30, 2025. Of the 1,488 reported incidents, 64% involved Black students, 16% were white, 11% were Hispanic, and almost 9% involved students of two or more races. Asian, American Indian or Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders accounted for less than 2% of the total.

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**Exhibit 2**  
**Reportable Offenses and School Enrollment**  
**by Race and Ethnicity**  
**2024-2025 School Year**



Source: Maryland State Department of Education

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Local school boards are required to adopt regulations designed to maintain an atmosphere of order and discipline within schools necessary for effective learning. Current law requires that the primary purpose of any disciplinary measure be rehabilitative, restorative, and educational. State regulations limit the circumstances under which a student arrested for a reportable offense, which includes most violent crimes, can be removed from regular school programming to cases in which the student presents an imminent threat of serious harm to other students or staff. No disciplinary actions against students suspected of specified crimes are further specified by the bill.

Requiring law enforcement to notify the State’s Attorney prior to an arrest for select students is likely to have the greatest impact on individual students since, in some cases, a student’s regular educational programming may be disrupted pending a possible arrest. However, it is unclear whether the increased reporting activity would exacerbate existing disparities in discipline for students arrested for reportable offenses because a school must follow the same disciplinary procedures as it does with all other students and removal from regular school programming is limited to those students that present an imminent danger.

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**Conclusion**

The bill’s notification requirements for students who are suspects in specified violent crimes will likely have a positive public safety impact since no current mechanism allows law enforcement to

notify school officials of a juvenile attending their school that is a suspect, but who has not been officially charged, in a reportable offense. While more information on the number of suspects triggering the bill's requirements is necessary to conduct a more conclusive analysis, it can be extrapolated from demographic data for reportable offense arrests that Black students may also be disproportionately represented in those suspected of these specified crimes. The bill's overall impacts on racial equity will depend on the extent to which the discretionary aspects of the bill are carried out by law enforcement, the State's Attorney, and school officials.

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**Information Sources:** Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center; Department of Legislative Services

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## Appendix – Maryland Demographics

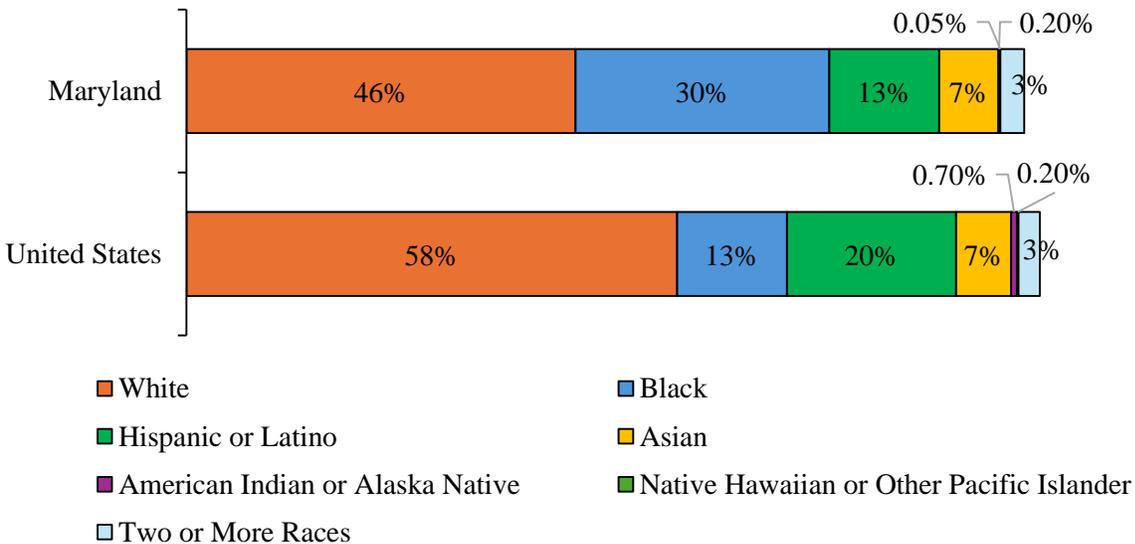
### *Race and Ethnicity of the Maryland Population*

Maryland’s 2020 census population is 6,177,244, a 7% increase from the 2010 census count and approximately 2% higher than the 2019 census population estimates. Maryland remains one of the most racially and ethnically diverse states in the nation and is ranked as the fourth most diverse state by the U.S. Census Bureau’s [Diversity Index](#). While no single racial or ethnic group constitutes a majority, racial minorities as a group constitute a majority of the State’s population. This diversity underpins the analytical framework used in racial equity impact notes (REIN), which seek to identify potential disparities that may be exacerbated or created by proposed criminal justice legislation.

### *Methodology Update*

Beginning in 2025, REIN will use annual population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Population Estimates Program (PEP) as the basis for disparity and disproportionality calculations. This methodological update reflects best practices in demographic analysis, as PEP data incorporate births, deaths, and migration to provide the most current population counts between censuses. Although the estimates are more temporally responsive, they do not materially change the proportionate racial and ethnic breakdown observed in the 2020 census. Instead, they conservatively reflect population changes since 2020 while preserving the overall demographic composition of the State.

**U.S. and Maryland Population by Race and Ethnicity  
2024 Population Estimates**



Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2024 (NC-EST2024-SR11H) and (SC-EST2024-SR11H-24)