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BILL: HB 700 - Education - Crimes on School Grounds - Exemptions
SPONSOR: Delegate Sheila Ruth
POSITION: FAVORABLE

Friday, March 26, 2021

HB 700

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee. We are writing in favor of HB 700.

The Maryland Student Coalition (“MSC”) strongly advocates for school safety, educational equity, and mental health. HB 700 will protect students with behavioral disabilities and those who do not have access to the mental health resources they should. It is important to recognize that many students that exhibit disruptive behavior are simply expressing themselves in the only manner they know of, or are capable of. It is essential that these students are not placed in the criminal justice pipeline for mental health episodes and things that they can not control. The MSC advocates for additional resources to assist those who live with behavioral and developmental disabilities, and feel that these incidents should and must be handled in school without police involvement.

As expressed by the Maryland Office of the Public Defender¹, §26-101 is commonly used to criminalize the behavior of youth with disabilities. HB 700 breaks the systemic link to prison that many disenfranchised students are unfortunately forced into. School discipline belongs in schools and not with law enforcement.

For the reasons stated above, we urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB 700.

¹ https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte_testimony/2021/wam/1kSgs5NVJrAKVVBumCUWebeFgFQgHT__P9.pdf