



Maryland Education Coalition



INSPIRES ACTION & POSITIVE CHANGE SO MARYLAND'S STUDENTS SUCCEED

Rick Tyler, Jr., Chair

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DATE: March 18, 2021

BILL: HB171
COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs

TITLE: State Department of Education - School Discipline –
Data Collection
POSITION: SUPPORT

The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) has been in existence for over 40 years and is made up of 20 statewide organizations & several individuals who represent parents, civil rights, & special population groups including lower income, special needs, limited English, Gifted & Talented and people of color. We advocate for adequate, equitable funding and systematic accountability for Maryland public school students regardless of their academic, cultural, economic, geographic, racial, or other demographic status. We believe a public education allows all students access to a quality education so each may graduate college or career-ready is a constitutional right based on [Article VIII of the Maryland Constitution](#). We also believe it is a civil right.

MEC supports HB171, requiring the Maryland State Department of Education to report on student discipline data disaggregated by race, gender, special education status, and other criteria. It also would require school systems and individual schools to provide these reports in a format similar compatible to other public education data collection that is reported. The bill would also improve upon existing criteria for identifying high suspending schools by adding a provision for identifying schools based on the percent of the population suspended and changing the ratio for the disproportionate suspension of children with disabilities from a ratio of 3 to 1 to a ratio of 2 to 1.

Several MEC representatives were active members of the Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices and have extensive experience working with the General Assembly, MSDE and local school systems on updating and reforming discipline policies and practices in Maryland Schools. Among the ongoing concerns has been the lack of detailed demographic data, transparency, and availability of such data in a timely manner.

MEC supports transparency and the availability of data as a pre-condition for addressing disparities and remains concern with the disproportionately high number and percentage of black students who are suspended. These students lose an unreasonable and unacceptable amount of critical instructional time and days in school. This bill will result in improved outcomes for students, reductions in overall suspensions, and reduce disproportionately and evidence shows that suspensions severely disrupt a child's education and set them back academically in ways that are at times impossible to make up.

MEC also offers an excerpt from our [position on Discipline](#) – *“Ample evidence establishes that too many children continue to be pushed out of school. These children are disproportionately students of color, lower-income, students with disabilities or gifted and talented. Once suspended, these children are denied crucial instruction time and placed at significant risk of disengaging from school, dropping out, acting inappropriately or entering the criminal justice system.”*

Therefore, MEC request supports of HB171 State Department of Education - School Discipline - Data Collection.

Respectfully yours,
Rick Tyler, Jr., Chair

Advocates for Children and Youth, American Civil Liberties Union of MD, Arts Education in Maryland Schools, Arts Every Day, Attendance Works, CASA, Decoding Dyslexia of MD, Disability Rights MD, League of Women Voters of MD, Let Them See Clearly, MSC-NAACP, Maryland PTA, Maryland Coalition for Community Schools, Maryland Coalition for Gifted & Talented Ed, Maryland Out of School Time Network, Public Justice Center, Maryland School Psychologists' Association, Parent Advocacy Consortium, Right to Read MD, School Social Workers of MD, Barbara Dezmon, Kalam Hettleman, David Hornbeck, Rick Tyler, Jr., Shamoyia Gardiner, Sharon Rubinstein