



Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB171

State Department of Education - School Discipline - Data Collection

March 18, 2021

Dear Honorable Chairman Pinsky and Members of the EHEA:

The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE) is pleased to provide favorable testimony for House Bill 171, State Department of Education - School Discipline - Data Collection. MAREE is a coalition of education advocacy, civil rights, and community-based organizations committed to eliminating racial disparities in Maryland's education system.

HB171 would require the Maryland State Department of Education to report on student discipline data disaggregated by race, gender, special education status, and other criteria, for the school system and individual schools, and provide these reports in a format similar to how other public education data are reported. Transparency and availability of data is a pre-condition for addressing disparities. 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. This bill will result in improved outcomes for students, reductions in overall suspensions, and reduce disproportionately.

While MAREE supports these provisions that will improve transparency in reporting and equity for children we remain deeply concerned about the extraordinarily high number and percent of students of Black students who are suspended. According to estimates released by the U.S. Department of Education there were 164,799 days of instruction lost due to out-of-school suspensions during the 2015-16 school year. Of these, 68.5% of days missed were by African American students. And in the 2017-18 school year Black students made up 34% of the student population and 60% of the total suspensions.

MAREE supports HB171 and will continue to advocate for legislation, policies and practices that not only eliminate racial disparities in discipline practices, but also eliminates racial disparities in all other educational practices and policies within the state of Maryland.

