

February 7, 2021

Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD. 21401

In Support of HB 700: Education – Disruption of School Activities – Repeal of Prohibition

Members of the House Ways and Means House Committee.

As a parent and advocate for persons with disabilities, and education reforms, I fully support the changes to the language within Education Article 26-101.

I feel that some of the language used within this bill was too broadly defined and did not take into account a student that disrupts class and school activities due to their disabilities. A child with disabilities is not “willfully” disrupting school activities when their disability interferes with their access to and ability to learn within their daily education curriculum or IEP.

As parents and advocates for children with disabilities, we FULLY support any piece of legislation that brings about more equity to the discipline policies within Maryland schools. And a bill that helps to increase the equity and equality for black students, brown students and all those students with disabilities, is a great one. No longer should we tolerate students being removed from their learning environment and being placed into handcuffs; the start of the school to prison pipeline. This is a story too often told in our public schools. Simply put, this story MUST change if we hold out hope for improving the outcomes of all Maryland students.

Interactions with public school SRO’s, and local police officers often leave a negative (sometimes deadly), long lasting physical, and mental impact on a child. Negatively impacting their ability to feel safe or to prosper in their learning environment. Behave or be placed into handcuffs and possibly fined! What kind of lesson is that to impart on any Maryland student?

Please help to support all of our students so that they can gain the skills and education, so that all can reach their full potential and achieve great heights.

We ask that you please support House Bill 700 and revise the language contained within education article 26-101. Please return a favorable report on HB 700.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of my testimony today.

Mr. Richard Ceruolo
Parent and advocate for persons living with disabilities
Parent Advocacy Consortium