



"Being here for Maryland's Children, Youth, and Families"

**Testimony submitted to House Ways and Means Committee
Support**

February 24, 2021

**House Bill 1166 – Education - Physical Restraint and Seclusion –
Requirements, Reporting, and Training**

The Maryland Association of Youth Service Bureaus, which represents a statewide network of Bureaus throughout the State of Maryland, Supports House Bill 1166 - Education - Physical Restraint and Seclusion - Requirements, Reporting, and Training. Youth Service Bureaus provide prevention, intervention and treatment services and understand the importance of providing appropriate discipline for students while utilizing a trauma informed approach to ensure the safety of students and staff.

According to the CDC, two-thirds of adults experienced at least one Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) and many people experienced more than one such event. ACEs include all types of abuse and neglect as well as parental mental illness, substance use, divorce, incarceration, and domestic violence. Research has shown that children exposed to multiple ACEs are in a constant state of stress which makes absorption of new academic material challenging. In addition, these children may struggle with following rules and authority, leading to disruptive behaviors in school. Schools need to have appropriate policies and procedures in place that both provide limits to the youth and maintain a safe environment for all. This bill requires school personnel to be thoughtful in their use of physical restraint and seclusion to ensure that youth are not being retraumatized, that these discipline approaches are used only when absolutely necessary, and that other discipline and de-escalation procedures have been attempted. The bill does recognize there are situations such as school fights where staff may have to act quickly and allows for these moments.

A Trauma Informed Intervention recognizes that youth and children may have experienced ACEs such as violence, abuse, neglect, disaster, terrorism and war that may have impacted the child's physical and emotional development and thus behavior and performance in school. Using a trauma informed approach to discipline can positively influence the entire school culture and lead to lowered disciplinary reports and increased academic test scores.

This bill will establish the guidelines and trainings necessary for schools to become trauma informed and to develop policies and procedures for restraint and seclusion based on these principles. The Bill also requires MSDE to collect data on the use of restraint and seclusion by schools so that these forms of discipline can be better tracked, as well as the demographics of students who are restrained and secluded. This data is important to help the State better understand how these discipline measures are being used and if they are used disproportionately for certain student populations.

We respectfully ask you to **Support** this bill.

Respectfully Submitted:

Liz Park, PhD
MAYSB Chair
lpark@greenbeltmd.gov