



Maryland Youth Advisory Council
c/o Governor's Office of Crime
Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services
100 Community Place,
Crownsville, MD 21032

James Mu, *Chair*
Ricky Bridges, *Vice-Chair*
Jason Park, *Secretary*

4/4/2022

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: HB 23 School Discipline Data Collection
Position: Support

Dear Chairman Pinsky:

On behalf of the Maryland Youth Advisory Council, I am pleased to have the opportunity to offer comments regarding **HB0023 School Discipline Data Collection**.

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council prides itself on being a coalition of diverse young advocates and leaders from across the state, working to serve as a voice for youth in the state of Maryland. As leaders in our communities, and as appointees of the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Maryland Association of Student Councils, Maryland Higher Education Commission, and the University System of Maryland, we take every opportunity to address relevant issues by influencing legislation, spreading public awareness and serving as a liaison between youth and policymakers regarding issues impacting youth.

We applaud Delegate Washington for proposing this bill to identify and address disproportionate disciplinary practices among Maryland schools. As a voice for Maryland's youth, we value the accessibility of quality education for all students regardless of their background. Therefore, we recognize the importance of providing clear data on disciplinary issues and utilizing such data for further school improvement. The most crucial part of the bill is the inclusion of data reporting for schools identified as high suspending. In addition, we are particularly pleased to see the emphasis on alternative methods of discipline such as restorative approaches.

According to the National Education Association, restorative approaches to school discipline have not only been able to build stronger student and teacher relationships but also, allow youth to learn conflict resolution skills. This is an integral part of establishing a healthy school environment where Maryland's students are provided with the opportunity to grow. Therefore, understanding and providing access to school discipline data is a crucial step towards an improved school environment.

The 2018 research of the Maryland Equity Project showed that about 60% of out-of-school suspensions in Maryland are black students when they only make up about 35% of the public school population. These findings also concluded that schools with high suspension rates were struggling to be academically successful and had fewer experienced teachers. This only proves that school discipline data collection is not only crucial to identifying the needs of a school system but also to ensure that steps are being taken to maintain an equitable school environment.

Every student is unique and deserves the best environment for quality education. This proposed policy is crucial to providing Maryland's students with an improved school environment because disciplinary actions amongst schools are an integral part of an educational environment. This regulation further pushes for the data collected to be utilized towards building relationships with youth and overall contributing to the well-being of the school community. **Therefore, we urge favorable support for HB0023 School Discipline - Data Collection.**

Sincerely,

James Mu, Chair
Maryland Youth Advisory Council