



Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair
Delegate Alonzo T. Washington, Vice Chair
Ways and Means Committee
Room 131, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

January 14, 2022

Bill: House Bill 23 – School Discipline – Data Collection and School Resource Officers

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA), a professional organization representing about 500 school psychologists in Maryland. We advocate for the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic wellbeing of students and families across the state.

House Bill 23 requires the State Department of Education to disaggregate discipline-related data in an electronic spreadsheet format, adjust the process to identify disproportional disciplinary practices, report disproportionality data for high-suspending schools, and prohibit a school resource officer from unilaterally enforcing discipline. In January 2014, the Maryland State Department of Education adopted new regulations to address the overuse of exclusionary discipline practices and identify alternatives to exclusion (such as suspensions). However, based on the Maryland Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights report from October 2019, in Maryland, rates of exclusionary discipline continued to be high for all students¹. In addition, black students and students with disabilities are removed from the school setting for disciplinary reasoning at more than twice the rates of their peers. Clearly, more work needs to be done to address disproportional discipline practices. Recommendations from the committee included more specific policies and improved accountability. House Bill 23 is a step in the right direction to identifying and remediating disproportionalities in school discipline.

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) identifies discipline disproportionality as a threat to equity and social justice, and a byproduct of systemic racism². Additionally, exclusionary discipline practices can lead to greater risk of harm for students, such as dropout. Recommendations from NASP include requiring states to publicly report discipline data disaggregated and cross tabulated by race/ethnicity and disability status annually, ensure that school resource officers and other school-based law enforcement have no role in student discipline, and maintain data collection efforts to identify and intervene with schools that are disproportionately using exclusionary discipline practices with students with disabilities, all of which are addressed in House Bill 23.

To ensure equitable education practices and improve outcomes for our most high-risk students, MSPA strongly urges a favorable report on House Bill 23. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please contact us at legislative@mspaonline.org or Scott Tiffin at stiffin@policypartners.net or 443-350-1325.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Phipps, M.Ed., Ed.S., NCSP
Chair, Legislative Committee
Maryland School Psychologists' Association

¹ Maryland Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. (October 2019). *Disparities in school discipline in Maryland*.

<https://www.usccr.gov/files/pubs/2020/01-14-MD-SAC-School-Discipline-Report.pdf>

² National Association of School Psychologists. (2021). NASP Position Statement: Promoting just special education identification and school discipline practices.