

# **TESTIMONY AGAINST**

Testimony to the Ways and Means Committee

In opposition to

House Bill 1145: Education– Student Behavior– Parent Notice and Required Counseling (Parent Accountability Act)

March 9, 2022

## **Strong Schools Maryland urges an unfavorable vote on House Bill 1145: Education– Student Behavior– Parent Notice and Required Counseling (Parent Accountability Act)**

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future envisions a world-class system of public schools for our state’s students. A part of that is viewing the students from a holistic perspective; there are many aspects that could contribute to a student’s success in education including community, health, and finances. HB1145 simply does not take these into consideration as it vies for parent accountability.

Rather HB1145 brings harm in the following ways:

- Fails to account for the fact that parents of Black and Brown children are more likely to hold a job that has irregular working hours or pays below the basic economic security wage. If parents are mandated to participate in counseling, these factors could contribute towards their inability to meet the requirements, causing them to have to go to court which takes time away from earning enough money to support their families; and
- Does not consider that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many students and families have been impacted with mental health issues—which some students use behavior outbursts as their only way to cop—and financial burdens. To suddenly require a hard measure of accountability does not benefit the child or family after two years of crisis.

As students and educators return to in-person learning after two years of school closures and social isolation, disruptive behaviors and violence as a result of grief, anxiety, and depression are becoming more prevalent. In Maryland, 52% of Black/African-American youth and 75% of LGBTQI+ have felt significantly sadder and more hopeless compared to statewide average.<sup>1</sup> If HB1145 passes, many parents will be required to seek and participate in counseling that might not directly address their needs. What is important now, as we move forward during the pandemic, is to converse with families and communities about what their needs are and actively meet those needs.

The Blueprint views a student from a holistic perspective. It takes areas such as community and finances into consideration when building resources that allow all students to succeed. HB1145 only sets Maryland back from achieving this world-class vision. Therefore, we urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 1145.

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<sup>1</sup> MSDE, Mental Health in Schools, 2022,

<https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/2022/0222/MentalHealthinSchoolsFebruary2022V2.pdf>

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*If you have questions or requests for additional information, you can email:*

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