



March 21, 2023

The Honorable Brian Feldman
Senate Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support - House Bill 185: Nonpublic Schools and Child Care Providers - Corporal Punishment - Prohibition

Dear Chairman Feldman and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those who have a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS/WPS support House Bill 185: Nonpublic Schools and Child Care Providers - Corporal Punishment – Prohibition. Corporal punishment, which involves physically punishing a student as a means of discipline, has been a topic of much debate in education. Several reasons exist why it should be banned in all schools:

- **Corporal punishment is ineffective:** Studies have shown that corporal punishment is not an effective method of discipline. Instead, it can lead to a cycle of violence, resentment, and fear among students and fail to teach them how to behave appropriately.
- **Corporal punishment can cause physical and emotional harm:** Corporal punishment can cause physical injuries such as bruises, cuts, and in extreme cases, broken bones, as well as emotional harm such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. In addition, children who are subjected to corporal punishment can also develop behavioral problems, such as aggression and antisocial behavior.
- **Better alternatives exist:** Many alternatives to corporal punishment have been proven effective, such as positive reinforcement, counseling, and restorative justice programs. These alternatives promote a safe and positive learning environment and teach students how to behave appropriately and take responsibility for their actions.



In summary, banning corporal punishment in schools is necessary to ensure that students are not subjected to physical and emotional harm and to uphold their human rights to a safe and respectful learning environment. For the reasons above, MPS/WPS request a favorable report on HB 185. If you have any questions about this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com.

Respectfully submitted,
The Joint Legislative Action Committee
of the Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society