

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the Maryland Senate  
Education, Energy and Environment Committee - For the Hearing on  
Nonpublic Schools and Child Care Providers – Corporal Punishment – Prohibition (HB185)  
March 22, 2023  
SUPPORT**

Free State PTA represents over 50,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. Free State PTA is composed of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. As the state's premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. ***House Bill 185, Nonpublic Schools and Child Care Providers – Corporal Punishment – Prohibition , aligns with Free State PTA's principle for legislative action which states that schools must provide a safe environment where all students, teachers and staff can thrive.***

A founding principle of Free State PTA's (FSPTA) mission is to promote the safety and well-being of all children and youth. Also, the National PTA passed a resolution that supports efforts to abolish corporal punishment and efforts to develop alternative discipline programs to provide an orderly climate for learning. House Bill 0185 is consistent with this principle in that it prohibits educational institutions from administering corporal punishment and requires regulations adopted by the State Board of Education for the registration of family and large family child care homes and the licensing and operation of child care centers to prohibit corporal punishment.

The American Psychological Association<sup>1</sup> states that “Many studies have shown that physical punishment — including spanking, hitting and other means of causing pain — can lead to increased aggression, antisocial behavior, physical injury and mental health problems for children.” Not only has corporal punishment been shown to affect children's future behavior, it negatively affects their health. According to the World Health Organization<sup>2</sup>, “Children not only experience pain, sadness, fear, anger, shame and guilt, but feeling threatened also leads to physiological stress and the activation of neural pathways that support dealing with danger. Children who have been physically punished tend to exhibit high hormonal reactivity to stress, overloaded biological systems, including the nervous, cardiovascular and nutritional systems, and changes in brain structure and function.” This form of punishment is not consistent with trauma-informed education. Groups like Unicef<sup>3</sup> recommend positive discipline as an alternative to corporal punishment. We suggest training child care centers and parents on these alternatives. Free State PTA believes this bill is vital in ensuring the wellbeing of children and therefore, strongly urges that this committee issues a **favorable report on HB185**. The **Maryland Education Coalition** includes their support for a favorable report on HB185.

Testimony is presented on the behalf of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/04/spanking>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/corporal-punishment-and-health>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/parenting/child-care/how-discipline-your-child-smart-and-healthy-way>