



AFT 340 AFL-CIO
Seton Business Park
5800 Metro Drive, 2nd Floor
Baltimore, MD 21215-3209

Testimony in Support of House Bill 0568
Student - Organized Peaceful Demonstrations - Student Discipline and Policy

Ways and Means
February 22, 2023
1:00pm

The Baltimore Teachers Union supports House Bill 0568, which prohibits a public school from prohibiting a student from organizing or participating in a student-organized peaceful demonstration, imposing certain limits on a student's right to free speech while participating in a student-organized peaceful demonstration, or disciplining a student for organizing or participating in a student-organized peaceful demonstration under certain circumstances; and requiring each county board of education to develop a written policy regarding student-organized peaceful demonstrations.

The Baltimore Teachers Union represents 8,280 teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, clinicians, librarians, secretaries, community school site specialists, bus transportation aides, and many more school-based and central office support staff. We are 4 out of 5 workers in Baltimore City Public Schools, serving 75,595 students and their families. Our national union, the American Federation of Teachers, has over 1.7 million members in the United States and its territories.

The Baltimore Teachers Union believes in the importance of those most directly impacted having a voice about issues that affect their circumstances. We believe in the importance of developing and supporting the youth to leadership pipeline. These beliefs align with House Bill 568 by providing a clear structure for students to be able to organize and participate in peaceful demonstrations as outlined without suffering disciplinary action or causing significant disruptions to the learning environment.

In order for Baltimore City Schools to serve the needs of the whole child and prepare students to deeply understand the roots of inequality and equip them to transform our communities and classrooms, students need to be able to participate in the democratic process in order to express their views and advocate for change. The right of peaceful protest is an expression of democratic participation.

House Bill 568 also calls upon all school districts to develop a written policy regarding student-organized peaceful demonstrations. This guidance is currently lacking in Baltimore City school board policies and regulations.

House Bill 568 has at its core a clear pathway to allow students to express their view while protecting the health and safety of our students and minimizing disruptions to instruction. **It is for these reasons that the BTU supports House Bill 0568 and urges a favorable report.**



Telephone: (410) 358-6600 Fax: (410) 358-2894 Website: www.baltimoreteachers.org