
MARYLAND COALITION TO REFORM SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

WAYS AND MEANS HOUSE BILL 0069: PARENT AND GUARDIAN NOTICE AND REQUIRED COUNSELING ACT February 1, 2023

POSITION: Oppose

The Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline (CRSD) brings together advocates, service providers, and community members dedicated to transforming school discipline practices within Maryland's public school systems. We are committed to making discipline responsive to students' behavioral needs, fair, appropriate to the infraction, and designed to keep youth on track to graduate. **CRSD opposes House Bill 0069, which would require a parent or guardian of a student who engages in "two or more incidents of violent and disruptive behavior" to seek and participate in counseling, and makes it unlawful for them to fail to do so.**

The Coalition to Reform School Discipline (CRSD) has a number of concerns about HB0069:

- The bill fails to define "violent and disruptive behavior." Without a definition, school principals would have complete discretion to define the term as broadly as they wish.
- The bill fails to take into account that many parents who want community counseling or other mental health services for their children are unable to access them because of insurance barriers and/or limited availability of providers.
- The bill does not reflect educational or clinical best practices for many students, especially those with disabilities such as autism, traumatic brain injury, or emotional, intellectual, or behavioral disabilities, among others.
- The bill 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 proposed requirements, causing them to have to go to court and thereby taking time away from earning enough money to support their families.
- The bill conflicts with existing state policies and recommendations, including those created by MSDE's and local school districts' codes of conduct and the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports's Blueprint. These existing policies have established processes to address violent and disruptive behavior. This bill undermines the overall intent of these policies, on which many of us worked to overhaul. This bill is counter to the expert recommendations and evidence-based practices recommended by top behavioral health providers in Maryland.

For these reasons, CRSD opposes House Bill 0069.

For more information contact:

Emily Ames-Messinger & Spencer Hall, Co-chairs
Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline
CRSDMaryland@gmail.com

CRSD Members

ACLU of Maryland
Alliance Against Seclusion and Restraint
The Choice Program at UMBC
Community Law in Action
Sayra and Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families, Children and the Courts (CFCC)
Disability Rights Maryland
Maryland Office of the Public Defender
Public Justice Center
Project HEAL at the Kennedy Krieger Institute
League of Women Voters
Youth, Education, and Justice Clinic, University of Maryland Carey School of Law
Spencer M. Hall, Esq.