



**Testimony in SUPPORT of
Senate Bill 512: Education – Prohibited Behavior on School Grounds and Property – Application**

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: Favorable

February 28, 2024

At Strong Schools Maryland, we advocate for the faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. As a result, Strong Schools Maryland is dedicated to serving our Maryland student population and continuing to work to amplify youth voices. An integral aspect of supporting students involves protecting them from possible criminalization and/or discrimination. Senate Bill 512 proposes that specific prohibitions and penalizations for "disruptive" behavior not apply to students within the school.

Over-policing in the public education system has historically criminalized marginalized student groups such as Black and Brown children, students with disabilities, and Indigenous students.¹ To illustrate, according to research published by New York University, Black and Brown children have been historically and are currently being pushed out of schools, arrested, and face physical violence at a disproportionate rate despite the fact that these students do not misbehave any more than their white counterparts.² In Maryland specifically, students of color comprised 78% of our total number of suspensions and expulsions during the 2022-2023 school year.³ This over policing, penalizing, and prohibiting specific behavior has only further contributed to the school to prison pipeline and does real harm to many of our students and families.

We urge the committee to consider how, in addition to addressing racial and educational inequities, Senate Bill 512 represents a significant step towards meeting the behavioral needs of our students. By moving towards restorative practices, this bill states that punitive measures may not (and are often not) the most effective approach in addressing student behavior.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future envisions a World-Class public school system, emphasizing the importance of a safe, non punitive learning environment. To address this issue, we must deconstruct the rules and regulations that have perpetuated harmful practices, particularly those that result in over penalizing certain student behaviors.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 512.

For more information, contact Kenzie Funk at kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org

¹ [Police in Schools Continue to Target Black, Brown, and Indigenous Students with Disabilities](#)

² [The Education Justice Research and Organizing Collaborative](#)

³ [Suspensions By School and Major Offense Category. Maryland Public Schools, 2022 - 2023](#)