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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
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**Testimony in Support of SB61 - Higher Education - Disciplinary Records - Use in Admissions and Disciplinary Proceedings**

It is evident that universities are factoring disciplinary records into admissions decisions and that these records can have negative consequences for these students seeking admittance. According to the Ballard Center, Minority students are more likely to face disciplinary actions than their white counterparts. As such, a disparity exists in college applications due to the fear of potential disqualification.

To address these issues, I am introducing SB 61, which will prevent the collection and use of high school disciplinary records from the admissions process in Maryland public universities and colleges.

Data from the Common Application, a standard application used by over 1000 colleges and universities nationwide, finds that among students who share their school disciplinary record, 22% do not complete their application. As a result of these findings, they removed their question regarding disciplinary history in 2021 to increase engagement with students of color and those from low-income backgrounds.

The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights Data found that Black students are 3.5 times more likely to be suspended or expelled than white students. These racial biases at the high school level should not weigh in on a student's chances for admission to universities.

This body also passed "Ban the Box" legislation in 2019 (SB 839, or the Criminal Record Screening Processes), prohibiting colleges and universities that receive State funds from asking about an applicant's criminal history during the initial admissions process. Through SB 61, we are continuing this effort to increase racial equity and provide more opportunities for students of all backgrounds.

To encourage our students to grow from youthful mistakes, transitioning away from using disciplinary records in the admissions process is essential. This legislation will increase accessibility for all Maryland students to higher education, help close the school-to-prison pipeline, and stop deterring students from applying to college.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 61.