
MARYLAND COALITION TO REFORM SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

EDUCATION, ENERGY, and the ENVIRONMENT SENATE BILL 540: Education - School Mapping Data Program - Established

DATE: February 28, 2024

POSITION: Letter of Information

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. CRSD is committed to the fair and equitable treatment of ALL students, including pregnant or parenting students, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and socio-economic status, and reducing barriers to learning for ALL students. CRSD submits this letter of information to provide context for and articulate our concerns with SB 540, which would allow local school boards to use existing Safe School Funds to produce school mapping data for all public schools.

CRSD was unable to find independent research supporting the efficacy of school mapping. This search included a thorough examination of the current academic literature, resources published by the National Center for School Safety, and the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

There are considerable cost concerns. We do not know how much it will cost to create maps of every school in a district or how many schools might have existing maps. We also do not know what it will cost—or where the funding will come from—to provide training to ensure that school personnel effectively use these maps and incorporate them into their school safety planning process. Or how much it will cost to maintain up-to-date maps.

Most importantly, this bill does not expand the Safe Schools Fund. As the fiscal note clearly explains, **by authorizing grants for school data mapping, “fewer funds are available for other authorized purposes.”** The bill also increases general fund expenditures to cover the salary of an education program specialist with expertise in mapping software platforms to manage grants and other costs.

Data mapping is a new technology that has not been widely used in schools and does not focus on the most effective strategies that enhance school safety. We urge the Maryland General Assembly and the Maryland Center for School Safety to focus the funds’ finite resources on evidence-based practices by expanding behavioral health services, fully implementing restorative practices, and supporting schools in building healthy, supportive relationships. For these reasons, CRSD has concerns about the efficacy of SB 540.

For more information contact: Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline
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CRSD Members

ACLU of Maryland

The Choice Program at UMBC

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Maryland Office of the Public Defender

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