
MARYLAND COALITION TO REFORM SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

HOUSE WAYS and MEANS and APPROPRIATIONS
HOUSE BILL 1167: Maryland Center for School Safety – Statewide Secure Schools
Emergency Response Program - Established

DATE: February 21, 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 ***HB 1167, which would establish a statewide schools emergency response program*** administered by the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS).

While the safety of students in schools is of paramount importance, the response to making schools safer frequently is to increase security measures and surveillance, place school police on school campuses, control access to buildings, and install metal detectors. While these efforts are well meaning and have intuitive appeal, they are often enacted without consultation of the empirical evidence. Implementing a Statewide school emergency response program is another well-meaning security measure that has not been adequately researched to determine its effectiveness.

Security measures are expensive and result in trade-offs. The bill calls for a budget appropriation of \$4,500,000 to procure and implement an emergency communication platform. It is not clear this will cover all of the costs and whether schools will encounter additional costs to train personnel, revise school preparedness plans, or maintain and update the system over time. Since emergency events are infrequent occurrences, this a very expensive program that diverts funding from other, evidence-based practices that promote school safety, student well-being, and enhance learning.

Enhancing school safety should rely on evidence-based policies and procedures that both keep our schools safe and maintain an environment conducive to learning. We urge the Maryland General Assembly and the Maryland Center for School Safety to focus on evidence-based policies and practices that create positive school climates, expand behavioral health services, fully implement restorative practices, and support schools in building healthy, supportive relationships. For these reasons, CRSD has concerns about the efficacy of HB 1167.

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CRSD Members

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