



**Testimony in OPPOSITION of
House Bill 206: Student Behavior – Parent and Guardian Notice and Required Counseling**

Ways and Means Committee

Position: Oppose

January 31, 2024

Strong Schools Maryland, a member of the Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline (CRSD), holds firm to our core value that the systems impacting our state’s students must treat them justly so they can thrive. As such, **Strong Schools Maryland urges an unfavorable vote on House Bill 206**, which would require the parent or guardian of a student who engages in “two or more incidents of violent and disruptive behavior” to seek and participate in counseling with the student, criminalizing those who are unable to do so.

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future aims to create a World-Class public school system in which children are centered and positive relationships are built between schools and the families they serve, leaving no room for punitive discipline. HB206 does not do that, and instead:

- Fails to define “violent and disruptive behavior.” The lack of a clear definition limits high-quality implementation and allows school administration to take punitive action based on implicit biases they may have;
- Ignores financial, insurance, and time constraint barriers that parents and families are actively experiencing in many Maryland communities, specifically Black communities who are disproportionately suspended and expelled from Maryland schools¹; and
- Conflicts with existing state policies and recommendations like limiting the use of exclusionary discipline and expanding preventative approaches². MSDE and local school districts have codes of conduct, which have established processes to address “violent and disruptive” behavior.

It is the responsibility of the Maryland General Assembly to advance legislation that fosters strong relationships between schools and students, which are vital to student success. We urge this committee to utilize this Session to advance legislation that promotes restorative practices and child-centered school culture improvement strategies that help Maryland’s schools compete with the highest-achieving schools in the world.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 206.

For more information, contact Riya Gupta at riya@strongschoolsmaryland.org

¹ [Maryland State Department of Education](#)

² [Maryland Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights](#)