

MARYLAND COALITION TO REFORM SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL 206: EDUCATION-STUDENT BEHAVIOR-PARENT AND GUARDIAN NOTICE AND REQUIRED COUNSELING (PARENT AND GUARDIAN ACCOUNTABILITY ACT)

DATE: JANUARY 31, 2024

POSITION: OPPOSE

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 **opposes HB 206**, which would require the parent or guardian of a student who engages in "two or more incidents of violent and disruptive behavior on school premises or during school-related activities during the school year" to seek and participate in counseling with the student and to make it unlawful for parent's to fail to do so. CRSD has many concerns about HB 206.

CRSD has a number of concerns about HB 206, including:

- The bill fails to define "violent and disruptive behavior." Without a definition, school principals would have complete discretion to define the term as broadly as they wish.
- The bill fails to take into account that many parents who want community counseling or other mental health services for their children are unable to access them because of insurance barriers and/or limited availability of providers.
- The bill does not reflect educational or clinical best practices for many students, including students with disabilities such as autism, traumatic brain injury, or emotional, or intellectual, or behavioral disabilities, among others.
- The bill fails to account for the fact that parents of Black and Brown children are more likely to hold a job that has irregular working hours or pays below the basic economic security wage. If parents are mandated to participate in counseling, these factors could contribute towards their inability to meet the proposed requirements, causing them to have to go to court and thereby taking time away from earning enough money to support their families.
- The bill conflicts with existing state policies and recommendations, including those created by MSDE's and local school districts' codes of conduct and the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports' Blueprint. These existing policies have established processes to address violent and disruptive behavior. This bill undermines the overall intent of these policies, on which many of us worked to overhaul.

This bill is counter to the expert recommendations and evidence-based practices recommended by top behavioral health providers in Maryland.

For these reasons, CRSD opposes HB 206.

For more information contact:

Annie Carver, chair of legislative committee

Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline

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CRSD Members

Project HEAL (Health, Education, Advocacy, and Law) at Kennedy Krieger Institute

Public Justice Center, Education Stability Project

The Arc Maryland- Ande Kolp, Executive Director

Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

League of Women Voters of Maryland

Maryland Office of the Public Defender

ACLU of Maryland

The Choice Program at UMBC

FreeState Justice

Sara and Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families, Children and the Courts at University of Baltimore School of Law

Baltimore Teachers' Union