



**Testimony in SUPPORT of  
House Bill 1400: Public Schools – Student Use of Force – Authorization**

**Ways and Means Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

March 6, 2024

At Strong Schools Maryland, we advocate for the faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. As a result, Strong Schools Maryland is dedicated to amplifying student voices. Students are entitled to their human rights. **Strong Schools Maryland urges a favorable vote on HB1400**, which affirms these rights by ensuring students are provided due process if they somehow get involved in a physical altercation.

House Bill 1400 proposes adding students to existing statute that allows a principal, teacher, security guard or other school staff to use a reasonable amount of force to defend themselves, break up a fight, escape an attack, or prevent violence. The proposed legislation protects a student from being disciplined for defending themselves physically against an attack by requiring that for any incident, there would be an investigation and a determination.

In many instances, school districts may discipline all students involved in an incident through “Zero Tolerance” policies, regardless of who started the altercation and their involvement. These same school discipline practices in the public education system have historically criminalized marginalized student groups such as Black and Brown children, students with disabilities, and Indigenous students.<sup>1</sup> To illustrate, according to research published by New York University, Black and Brown children have been historically and are currently being pushed out of schools, arrested, and face physical violence at a disproportionate rate despite the fact that these students do not misbehave any more than their white counterparts.<sup>2</sup> In Maryland specifically, students of color comprised 78% and students with disabilities comprised more than a quarter of our total number of suspensions and expulsions during the 2022–2023 school year.<sup>3</sup> At the bare minimum, this proposed bill allows students to receive due process that prevents them from being over-criminalized for protecting themselves or others.

The end goal of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future is a World-Class public school system that is a safe, non-punitive learning environment that actively utilizes restorative practices. While we work towards that goal, we must deconstruct the rules and regulations that have over-penalized and over-criminalized students without thorough due process.

**For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 1400.**

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<sup>1</sup> [Police in Schools Continue to Target Black, Brown, and Indigenous Students with Disabilities](#)

<sup>2</sup> [The Education Justice Research and Organizing Collaborative](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Suspensions By School and Major Offense Category, Maryland Public Schools, 2022 - 2023](#)