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# MARYLAND COALITION TO REFORM SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

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## **HB 504 / SB 429: Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act February 12, 2025**

### **POSITION: Unfavorable**

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 respectfully requests an unfavorable report on HB 504/SB 429. We maintain that the General Assembly must fully fund Blueprint for Maryland's Success.

CRSD has five guiding principles.

1. We are committed to the fair and equitable treatment of ALL students regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and socio-economic status, and reducing barriers to learning for ALL students.
2. We vow to work to eliminate any barriers to learning for students listed above.
3. We are committed to ensuring Maryland schools use exclusionary discipline only as a last resort and use alternatives whenever possible.
4. We are committed to advocating for the use of restorative practices in Maryland schools.
5. We imagine a broader vision of school safety, without punitive measures. We believe Maryland schools should be free of police. Working towards this goal, we will limit the power of the police to use school discipline.

Policies and practices for improved school climate and student wellbeing are woven throughout the Blueprint for Maryland's five pillars. CRSD's efforts most closely align with the fourth: More Resources to Ensure that All Students are Successful. The Maryland State Department of Education defines community schools, [As ones that] "promote positive, equitable outcomes by providing students and families with the physical and mental health, academic, and extracurricular supports needed to thrive. Community schools serve as hubs that bring families, communities, and partners together to remove barriers to learning. Using an asset-based approach, community schools strive to strengthen connections to generate improved student outcomes."<sup>1</sup>

During a moment when elected officials insist that there are *perceptions* of increased youth crime, it is imperative that the same legislators continue to invest fully in public education

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland State Department of Education, Community Schools + Concentration of Poverty Grants  
<https://blueprint.marylandpublicschools.org/community-schools/>

without delay.<sup>2</sup> Judge Steven Teske, the presiding juvenile court judge in Clayton County, Georgia, identified school connectedness as one of the greatest protective factors for delinquency in his testimony during a U.S. Senate hearing on ending the school to prison pipeline.<sup>3</sup> Community schools and wraparound services contribute to schools that are healthy, safe, and inclusive. We know that positive schools ensure greater community safety.

The proposal to freeze funding for community schools will disproportionately impact Black and Latine students, students from low wealth communities, multilingual learners, and students with IEPs and 504 plans. These cuts will have a significant negative effect on the districts that serve a greater proportion of these students.

CRSD respectfully opposes these bills and requests that you continue the commitment to approaches and practices that foster positive student behavior and a positive school climate for all. Positive schools are the building blocks of community safety.

**For more information contact:**

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**CRSD Members:**

The Choice Program at UMBC  
Progressive Maryland  
Public Justice Center  
Disability Rights Maryland  
Project HEAL at Kennedy Krieger Institute  
Sayra and Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families, Children and the Courts at the University of Baltimore School of Law  
ACLU of Maryland  
League of Women Voters of Maryland

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<sup>2</sup> Hannah Gaskill, “How to address juvenile justice issues? Maryland Senate President Bill Ferguson says there’s a need for cohesion, responsibility.” Baltimore Sun, December 17, 2023  
<https://www.baltimoresun.com/2023/12/17/how-to-address-juvenile-justice-issues-maryland-senate-president-bill-ferguson-says-theres-a-need-for-cohesion-responsibility/>

<sup>3</sup> The Hon. Steven Teske, Testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights, Subcommittee Hearing on “Ending the School to Prison Pipeline” 2 (Dec. 12, 2012),  
<https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/12-12-12TeskeTestimony.pdf>.