



Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Bill Number: Senate Bill 482 – Public Middle and High Schools – Student Discipline (Right to Teach Act of 2025)

Hearing Date: February 21, 2025

Position: Oppose

The Maryland School Counselor Association (MSCA), representing over 900 professional school counselors working with students from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade in public, private, charter, and magnet schools, strongly **opposes SB 482**. This bill grants public middle and high school teachers the authority to take disciplinary action in response to certain student behaviors and to refer students to school principals or “guidance counselors” for discipline. Additionally, it prohibits county boards from taking action against principals or “guidance counselors” for specific disciplinary decisions.

MSCA opposes this legislation because each school system already has established protocols for managing student behavior, and SB 482 contradicts trauma-informed practices that prioritize student well-being and long-term success.

Furthermore, the bill uses the outdated term “guidance counselor.” The preferred and accurate title today is “school counselor,” which reflects our profession’s comprehensive role in supporting students’ academic, career, and social-emotional development—not just providing career guidance.

School counselors are highly trained in promoting positive student behavior and preventing disruptions. We maintain supportive, non-threatening relationships with students to foster their achievement and personal growth. As key contributors to schoolwide discipline strategies, school counselors serve as resources for school staff in developing proactive, research-based interventions.

By policy, school counselors should remain neutral, acting as consultants, mediators, and student advocates—not as disciplinary enforcers, as implied in SB 482. Maryland’s school systems already implement trauma-informed and restorative practices to address student behavior effectively. School counselors collaborate with school teams to manage repeated or disruptive behaviors through strategies that prioritize student support over punitive action.

Effective discipline within a trauma-informed framework moves away from traditional punitive measures—like those suggested in SB 482—and instead prioritizes student safety, recognizes trauma triggers, and employs

restorative practices to address behavioral concerns. These approaches, already in place across Maryland, include community circles, conflict mediation, and individualized counseling to encourage open dialogue and reflection. By actively listening to students and working collaboratively to develop constructive solutions, we foster a more supportive and effective learning environment.

Old-school, punitive discipline methods are ineffective and outdated. Maryland has already taken meaningful steps toward discipline reform, and it was the right move. We must continue allowing school systems to address student behavior using restorative and trauma-informed approaches rather than regressing to outdated disciplinary policies.

For these reasons, MSCA urges an unfavorable report on SB 482. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Jocelyn I. Collins at jcollins@policypartners.net.