

**BENJAMIN BROOKS**  
*Legislative District 10*  
Baltimore County

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Education, Energy, and the  
Environment Committee  
  
Energy Subcommittee

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Chair, Joint Electric Universal  
Service Program Workgroup



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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 714**  
**Public Schools – Discipline-Related Data-**  
**Collection and Publication**

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee  
February 21, 2025

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of this committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on SB 714, Public Schools – Discipline-Related Data – Collection and Publication. The purpose of this bill is to improve transparency and accountability in Maryland's public schools by requiring the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to collect and publicly disclose detailed, disaggregated discipline-related data. With this data, the bill tasks MSDE and local schools to make a plan to eliminate these disparities over a three year period.

Discipline-related data is critical to understanding the impact of school discipline practices on different groups of students. While efforts have been made to address issues like disproportionality in school discipline, there is still much work to be done. According to 2023-24 data, students with disabilities comprise 13% of students enrolled in Maryland public schools, but make up over twice that percentage of total students suspended and expelled. The current lack of transparency and public access to data makes it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of discipline policies and identify schools where disparities exist.

**TRANSPARENCY IN DATA**

The bill mandates that MSDE make available to the public discipline-related data in an accessible and disaggregated electronic spreadsheet format. Current law already breaks down suspension data by grade level, race, gender, ethnicity, and disability status. However, SB 714 will make sure that the data is also disaggregated by socioeconomic status, English language proficiency, and students with IEP'S and/or 504 plans. This will allow Maryland's residents, educators, and policymakers to analyze disciplinary trends and identify where disproportionate impacts may be occurring for all students.

## **ADJUSTING RISK RATIO**

Currently, MSDE uses a “risk ratio” to determine which schools have disproportionate discipline practices. The risk ratio compares the removal rate of each student group in a school to the removal rate of a comparison group in the school, (i.e., all other students in the school). Therefore, a school that suspends students *three times* more than the school or statewide average would have a risk ratio of 3.0. While MSDE already flags schools with a risk ratio of 3.0, the bill lowers the risk ratio threshold to 2.0 in order to more accurately identify schools with problematic discipline disparities and align Maryland law with Federal IDEA discipline reporting.

## **FLAGGING FOR HIGH SUSPENSION**

The bill will also have MSDE flag “high-suspending” schools if a school suspends 10% or more of students in each subgroup at elementary schools or 25% or more at secondary schools. This is to combat the overuse of suspension as a means of discipline.

## **ACTION PLANS TO IMPROVE DISCIPLINE**

When a school is identified as having disproportionate disciplinary practices, the bill requires that the school submit a plan to the State Board of Education to reduce these disparities in one year and then eliminate them in three. In addition to local action plans, MSDE will also develop a parallel action to support local schools and provide resources to reduce discipline disparities.

The disproportionate impact of school discipline on students of color, students with disabilities, and English language learners is a persistent problem in Maryland. SB 714 will help Maryland make significant strides toward eliminating it. By making this data public and disaggregated, schools can better understand these disparities and take meaningful steps to address them. Transparency is key in holding schools accountable, and this bill is an important step toward ensuring that all students, regardless of background, are treated fairly and equitably in our schools. SB 714 will also help school systems by providing them with the tools and support they need to improve their disciplinary practices and reduce suspensions, particularly among vulnerable student populations.

For these reasons, I am requesting a favorable report on SB 714.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin T. Brooks".

Benjamin Brooks