

February 19, 2025

Dear Maryland Senators,

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 482. I am a public school art teacher who has taught at the elementary level for almost 20 years. Over the past five years, I have written to all my representatives begging for legislation that would protect the learning environment, mandate safe classrooms free from violence and disruption. I am pleased to see SB 482 and believe it should gain bipartisan support. Afterall, who would not support "The Right To Teach".

I actually believe the bill should include elementary age students because we are seeing an increase in extreme behaviors at this level. I have seen entire classes have to be evacuated because of one student who is allowed to completely destroy a classroom. When school systems prioritize one student's disruptive behavior over the rest of the students' right to an education it is no longer school. At that point it becomes a hostage situation. I also regularly see teachers and staff physically assaulted. I wish you would look at the data that shows how many teachers have to receive medical attention for physical harm done by students not just in middle and high school but elementary school too.

Recently, I consoled a younger teacher after she had been attacked and punched repeatedly by a student. She called the office for support but when the guidance counselor arrived the student was not removed. When my colleague sought support from her administration they neglected to follow the code of conduct put forth by HCPSS and never employed any restorative practices before having the student come back to class.

It is absolutely no wonder that there is a teacher shortage. Had I known that being a teacher would put me at risk I would have chosen a different profession. I am eligible for early retirement 9/1/2026. I love teaching but I cannot continue teaching in an environment that allows disruptive students to rob peers of their education. I have to prioritize my own mental, emotional and physical wellbeing. Every day I go to school I know I am at risk of injury at the hands of violent children. So many question how much harm an elementary child can do to an adult. Believe me, it is significant. Besides being hit, kicked and bitten, adults are getting head injuries, broken bones, and stabbed. I've even seen a staff member sprayed with a fire extinguisher requiring medical attention for eyes and breathing. How much more abuse do you think teachers/staff should suffer at the hands of children? These teachers are heroes because if they weren't the ones sustaining this abuse more innocent children would be victims. I ask you to please support SB and preserve the right to teach and learn.

Sincerely,  
Michell Schalik