

FAVORABLE
House Bill 197
Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools – Comprehensive Plan

House Ways & Means Committee
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The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 197, which would require the State Department of Education to develop a comprehensive plan for the establishment of Restorative Practices Schools, which integrate restorative practices into daily routines and involve a schoolwide shift in mindset. This bill would also require a county board of education to use the comprehensive plan if the county board chooses to establish a Restorative Practices School. Each year, the Department would be required to report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the comprehensive plan for Restorative Practices Schools.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

We unequivocally believe that restorative justice practices are essential in creating a positive, safe, equitable, and healthy school environment and culture. A large body of evidence suggests that restorative justice practices build and improve relationships that foster strong school communities and dismantle the school to prison pipeline.

To that end, we appreciate that this bill seeks to establish model restorative practices training materials for school employees. Statewide standards for staff training in a variety of restorative approaches, including de-escalation strategies, implicit bias, and trauma-informed practices are paramount to ensuring that historically marginalized students learn in a safe, healthy, and supportive environment. We urge that staff who are leading restorative practices are members of the school administration and that all involved in staff training are compensated accordingly.

A commitment to restorative practices requires a mindset shift, one that we sincerely believe can transform schools to be more equitable and just. We recognize the urgency of advancing restorative practices across the state and we hope to continue this important conversation.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on House Bill 197.