

Testimony for HB 0457: Primary and Secondary Education - Educator Professional Development - Course on Student Well-Being and Flourishing

Sponsored by

Delegate [Wolek](#)

Status

In the House - Hearing 2/05 at 2:00 p.m.

Analysis

Synopsis

Requiring the State Department of Education to develop and offer a continuing professional development course on student well-being and flourishing to school personnel and administrators on or before July 1, 2026.

[Full Bill](#)

Testimony from Peace of Mind Inc. re: HB 0457 February 3, 2025

Students urgently need mental health support. Research shows children can't engage in school or solve conflicts peacefully unless their social and emotional needs are met. At Peace of Mind, we regularly hear from educators who are looking for effective, easy to use, educator developed and evidence-based tools to help them support students in their social and emotional development. Educators also need protected time in the school schedule to integrate these lessons into their curriculum and to engage in the training that prepares them to meet the SEL needs of their students and themselves.

The Peace of Mind program has been developed by educator Linda Ryden and students in Washington D.C. for over 20 years. As Executive Director of our nonprofit organization for the last 10 years, I have seen first hand how powerful it is to teach students to use mindfulness to manage big emotions, build healthy relationships and solve conflicts peacefully. Increasing the effectiveness of our program, Peace of Mind teaches brain science to help kids understand themselves and their reactions and to develop a sense of agency in challenging situations. Over time, we know that when taught with fidelity, the program facilitates the development of a common language and skill-set promoting student and teacher well-being and peaceful school communities.

Prepared, committed educators are key to successful program implementation. Research to be published in the *Journal of School Psychology* in April 2025 by SUNY Albany and Pennsylvania State

University experts in school-based mindfulness programs¹ has shown that the most important factors in successful implementation of the Peace of Mind program include educators' familiarity with the curriculum and having their own mindfulness practice. The biggest challenges to successful implementation included time to teach Peace of Mind lessons, access to curricular resources and collegial (including administrative) support. The study's findings affirm the data we have collected through educator surveys since 2016.

In surveys across 10 DC area schools in spring 2024, 95% of teachers and counselors confirmed that Peace of Mind meets students' social-emotional needs and fosters kind, inclusive classrooms and over 90% said it enhances students' readiness to learn. We believe that these strong results are possible because over 90% of educators also reported that Peace of Mind helps them manage their own stress and support their own well-being.

We hope that any mandated course for educators will include a focus on giving educators effective tools, like mindfulness practice, to tend to their own social and emotional well-being and also address the basic brain science related to experiencing and managing emotions. We hope it would also include an introduction to effective, evidence based curriculum like Peace of Mind that are already being used with positive impact in many MCPS and FCPS schools. At Peace of Mind we are training teachers every week and what we consistently hear is that educators are spending too much time cobbling resources together without the training they need to meet students' needs even as children's social and emotional needs are becoming more intense and widespread.

There has never been a more urgent time to prepare and support educators in meeting the social and emotional needs of our students. It is imperative that our children learn not only to cope with the challenges they are facing but also learn to create a better world. And if the curriculum educators are using to support their students supports their own well-being as well, we will have found a sustainable solution to building more kind, inclusive and equitable school communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Cheryl Dodwell, Executive Director, Peace of Mind Inc.

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About Peace of Mind

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Forthcoming in the Journal of School Psychology April 2025: *School-based mindfulness: Application of the PARIHS Framework to Contextualize Implementation* by Deborah L. Schussler, Sebrina L. Doyle Fosco, Melia A. Brown

An evidence-based program developed by educators, Peace of Mind Inc. currently partners with over 35 schools and out-of-school time programs across Washington, DC, including schools in Montgomery and Frederick County Maryland, supporting educators and school mental health professionals who deliver weekly PoM lessons to more than 5,000 students annually.

The Peace of Mind program equips children with the tools to lead with courage and compassion and build communities that thrive on kindness, respect, and inclusion. Our vision is that all kids will learn to manage challenging emotions when they are young instead of being derailed by them; to develop the skills and habits of kindness, gratitude and empathy that support their own well-being and the development of healthy relationships with others; to know how to de-escalate conflicts and resolve them peacefully. We envision kind and inclusive schools throughout the DC area and beyond in which children develop the tools to understand the context in which they are living and learning, and are able to find the courage to skillfully and compassionately promote justice and equity in their communities and in the world.

Peace of Mind was recently recognized by Spur Local as a critical non-profit since 2021 and listed by *Washingtonian Magazine* as one of the “20 Charities in the DC area who will put your Donation to Good Use.” EIN: 47-1449614.

For more information, please visit <https://TeachPeaceofMind.org>