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House Bill 197 – OPPOSE

House Committee on Ways and Means
"Public Schools - Restorative Practices Schools - Comprehensive Plan"
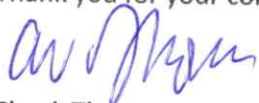
Please consider **OPPOSING HB0197**.

Restorative discipline policies focus on non-punitive conflict resolution, at the expense of accountability and effective school discipline. These practices inadvertently fail to address insubordination in a way that fosters responsibility, thereby crippling the student's mental maturity. Instead of ensuring that students face appropriate consequences for their actions, such policies can undermine behavioral growth and justify violence.

This therapeutic approach to misbehavior results in **classrooms that are mismanaged, chaotic and even unsafe.** By tolerating repeated disruptions and emotional outbursts, the learning environment becomes detrimental to both students and teachers. Furthermore, due to restorative practices, schools no longer take disciplinary measures such as suspension, except in the most extreme circumstances. Until they commit egregious acts of criminality, violent students are kept in school under the guise of a therapeutic ethos.

The tragic case of Nikolas Cruz, the shooter at Marjory Stoneman Douglass High School, underscores the dangers of such policies. Despite multiple prior incidents of violence and behavioral concerns, Cruz remained in school under interventions focused on treatment rather than accountability. This failure to enforce actual consequences contributed to an environment where his escalating behavior went unchecked, ultimately culminating in his taking the life of 17 innocent lives.

Maryland schools must prioritize policies that balance accountability with support to ensure safe and effective learning environments. Restorative practices should not replace disciplinary measures. I urge you to oppose this bill, as it risks further eroding school discipline and jeopardizing the safety and well-being of students, teachers, and the broader community.

Thank you for your consideration,

Chuck Thompson
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