

**SPONSOR TESTIMONY: DELEGATE AARON KAUFMAN**  
**HB 488: DISAGGREGATED DATA BILL**  
**WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE – FEBRUARY 12, 2025**

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Good afternoon, Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins and esteemed colleagues. I am Aaron Kaufman, District 18, Montgomery County. I am asking for a favorable report on HB 488: Public Schools, Discipline Related Data – Collection and Publication. I am very excited that Senator Ben Brooks is serving as the cross-file for this bill.

This bill was originally brought to my attention in early 2024 by the Kennedy Krieger Institute. I did bring this bill forward in the 2024 session. In the interim I have been working closely with the Coalition for School Reform Discipline, advocates from Public Justice, the ACLU, and advocates from the Kennedy Krieger Institute to enhance this bill and really demonstrate the need for this bill. I thank Delegate Ebersole for meeting with me and my staff twice and providing guidance for elevating this bill. We also met with the Maryland State Department of Education and focused on addressing the justifications needed for the percentage changes in the disproportionate ratios.

This bill requires the State Department of Education to make discipline related data easily accessible to the public, report this to the Governor yearly and explicitly break down the numbers to expose discrimination in our public school systems across the state. This bill will also require the data to be broken out by grade level, race, ethnicity, geography,

disability status, IEP students and gender. The bill seeks to lower the risk ratio from 3.0 to 2.0 percent which relates to levels of suspension in schools that disproportionately suspend students. A 3.0 suspension ratio is too high and doesn't accurately identify many schools with problematic discipline disparities. The 2.0 percent ratio aligns with the federal IDEA discipline reporting.

This bill provides for data transparency, making the data more accessible and being able to easily identify the schools that are disproportionately suspending students.

Unfortunately, there are school districts that disproportionately target or suspend students of color, special education students, students with IEPs and/or 504 plans. This is a tool for schools to consider whether suspension is the best form of discipline or utilize another approach. HB 488 also offers school districts the opportunity to address their schools with high suspension ratios, address problem behaviors with the goal of improving student behaviors and fostering a positive school environment.

It takes a village to raise a child, and this data is a piece of that village. The more information that is provided about the suspension ratios, the more schools can take proactive steps to make changes, support students and their families and strive to improve students' educational experiences. In conducting research, the advocates found that at Landsdowne Middle School in District 44 A, black students were suspended at a 2.95 percent suspension ratio in 2017 – 2018. MSDE has not produced any reporting since 2019.

This bill will require the Maryland State Department of Education to report out the number of suspensions each year, this will hopefully prevent and /or reduce the singling out of students who are troubled or need extra assistance in school.

Creating and fostering a positive school environment is a key investment in students and their learning. It is much better for students to be in the classroom and learning alongside their peers instead of being at home and falling behind.

Again, I ask for a favorable report on HB 488. Thank you very much for your time. I am happy to answer any questions you have.