



**Testimony in SUPPORT of**  
**House Bill 488: Public Schools – Discipline – Related Data – Collection and Publication**

**Ways and Means Committee**

**Position: Support**

February 12, 2025

At Strong Schools Maryland, we work to support the faithful implementation and full funding of the promises legislated through the landmark Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The Blueprint envisions a public school system that is built upon the foundation of equity, supports all students' success, and removes barriers to opportunities. As such, **Strong Schools Maryland urges a favorable report on House Bill 488**, which directly aligns with this vision by strengthening transparency and accountability in student discipline practices across Maryland.

Currently, disparities in school discipline persist, disproportionately impacting Black and Brown students, students with disabilities, and English Learners. Nationally and persistently, teachers have excluded and suspended Black students from school at the highest rate.<sup>1</sup> The disproportionalities towards these student groups are often rooted in policies and practices at the school level or in the interpersonal interactions/implicit biases that teachers and staff have about specific student groups. This targeting has deeply harmful impacts for students. According to the American Psychological Association, disproportionate targeting through disciplinary practices is linked with long lasting negative mental health effects, lower academic achievement and a negative school environment, underscoring the urgency in identifying these disproportionalities.<sup>2</sup>

House Bill 488 seeks to address these persistent disproportionalities by mandating that the Maryland State Department of Education:

- Collect disaggregated data related to student discipline by race, ethnicity, gender, disability status, socioeconomic status, English language proficiency, and type of disciplinary action.
- Publish this data in an accessible online spreadsheet format for community members.
- Report the disaggregated data to the Legislature and the Governor's office annually in order to identify schools with high risk ratios.

Local Education Agencies are also required to prepare an action plan to reduce disproportionalities in a school within their jurisdiction if identified as high risk for student groups in the data analysis.

The Governance and Accountability pillar of the Blueprint emphasizes the necessity of transparency in the strategies employed in our school systems. This bill aims to increase this level of transparency as it relates to student discipline in order to hold systems accountable for discipline related disparities. Holding systems

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<sup>1</sup> [Pushed Out: Trends and Disparities in Out-of-School Suspension](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Racism and Bias: Their Role in Maintaining Racial Disparities in PrK-12 Education](#)

accountable for disproportionate disciplinary action reinforces restorative justice practices and is a necessary step towards protecting communities, especially Black and Brown students and families, in Maryland's public schools.

**For these reasons, we urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on House Bill 488.**