

Testimony in Opposition of House Bill 68 and HB 137

Public Schools - Children Suspected of a Crime of Violence - Prohibition on In-Person Attendance (Student Protection Act of 2025)

TO: Chairperson Vanessa E. Atterberry, Vice-Chairperson Jheanelle K. Wilkins, and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Emily Sugrue

DATE: January 21, 2025

Emily Sugrue opposes HB68 and HB 137 which seeks to prohibit students from attending public school in person if they are identified as a suspect in a crime of violence. This bill is unnecessary, harmful to students, and raises significant concerns about equity, due process, and compliance with federal law.

I am a Baltimore City resident and have worked as a reading tutor in a Baltimore City public school. I have seen firsthand that when children miss school, they fall behind. I can think of several students whose literacy progress was delayed by even a brief absence from school. For many of my students; one-to-one reading support was only available at school, and it took patience and persistence to gain their trust and attention. I would often see rapid growth after several weeks of intensive tutoring, only to see backsliding after a multi-day absence from school.

Virtual school is not an appropriate substitute for in-person learning. I know this because my own education was interrupted as a high school student. My school offered correspondence courses as a pathway for me to finish high school on time, however I did not complete a single one of these courses and ultimately resorted to the GED. For many years I've carried guilt and shame about not finishing these correspondence courses, as if lacking the self-discipline and focus for independent work as a teenager was an indication of my future abilities as a student and productive member of society. The notion, presented to me by well-meaning adults, that correspondence courses "should" be doable for me intensified my self-doubt when they were not.

HB 68 and HB 137 duplicates existing protections, undermines due process, disproportionately impacts Black students and students with disabilities, and violates federal law. Rather than improving school safety, this bill would harm the very students who need support the most.

For these reasons, Emily Sugrue opposes HB68 and HB137 and urges an unfavorable report.

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Testimony in Opposition of HB 137

Public Schools - Children Charged With a Crime of Violence - Prohibition on In-Person Attendance (School Safety Act of 2025)

TO: Chairperson Vanessa E. Atterberry, Vice-Chairperson Jheanelle K. Wilkins, and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

FROM: **Insert Org/Name**

DATE: January **XX**, 2025

Insert Org/Name **opposes HB137** which seeks to prohibit students from attending public school in person if they have been charged with a crime of violence. This bill is unnecessary, harmful to students, and raises significant concerns about equity, due process, and compliance with federal law.

[Insert your testimony here:]

Consider using headers with CAPS, bold, underline, or italics to make sure legislators can't miss your most important points.

EXAMPLE FROM CRSD's TESTIMONY

Violation of Federal Law

HB 13 is not only unnecessary but also unlawful. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 require that students with disabilities receive a **free appropriate public education (FAPE)** in the **least restrictive environment (LRE)**. Mandating exclusion from in-person school based solely on criminal charges violates these legal protections, as it bypasses the individualized determinations made by an IEP team.

Education is Key to Preventing Recidivism

Research consistently shows that education is the number one protective factor against recidivism. By removing students from in-person schooling, HB 137 isolates them from critical academic, social, and emotional supports. Virtual learning and home-based instruction are inadequate substitutes for the comprehensive educational experience provided in traditional school settings, particularly for students with learning disabilities or other deficits.

Conclusion

[Insert your conclusion here]

EXAMPLE FROM CRSD'S TESTIMONY

HB 137 duplicates existing protections, undermines due process, disproportionately impacts Black students and students with disabilities, and violates federal law. Rather than improving school safety, this bill would harm the very students who need support the most.

For these reasons, Insert Org/Name opposes HB137 and urges an unfavorable report.