



Maryland Youth Advisory Council

c/o Governor's Office Children
100 Community Place,
Crownsville, MD 21032

Alex Hossainkhail, *Chair*

Thomas Evans, *Vice-Chair*
Folashade Epebinu, *Secretary*

March 19, 2025

Re: SB68 | Public Schools - Restorative Practices Schools - Comprehensive Plan

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Energy, Education, and Environment Committee,

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council prides itself on being a coalition of diverse young advocates and leaders who serve as a voice for youth in the state of Maryland. As leaders in our communities, and as appointees of the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Maryland Association of Student Councils, Maryland Higher Education Commission, and the University System of Maryland, we take every opportunity to address relevant issues by influencing legislation, spreading public awareness and serving as a liaison between youth and policymakers regarding issues facing youth.

SB68 ensures Maryland schools take a proactive, relationship-focused approach to student discipline, fostering environments where students feel supported rather than punished. For too long, schools have relied on suspensions and other punitive measures that do little to address the root causes of behavior, often pushing students further away from their education. **SB68** shifts this dynamic by integrating restorative practices—an approach that emphasizes accountability and conflict resolution, rather than exclusion.

Restorative practices have been proven to reduce suspensions, improve student-teacher relationships, and strengthen school climate¹. **SB68** directs the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to create a comprehensive plan that will guide schools in adopting these practices effectively. This plan will:

- Identify restorative practice coaches to support staff training, ensuring schools have the resources to implement change.
- Provide model training materials that integrate restorative approaches into daily school activities.
- Set clear standards for schools to be designated as Restorative Practices Schools.
- Establish performance metrics that track improvements in student conduct, absenteeism, teacher retention, mental health, and overall school climate.

¹Huang, Francis L, Anne Gregory, and Allison Rae Ward-Seidel. "The Impact of Restorative Practices on the Use of Out-of-School Suspensions: Results from a Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial." *Prevention science : the official journal of the Society for Prevention Research*, July 2023. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9972315/>.

Maryland has made great efforts in rethinking school discipline, but work remains. Too many students—especially those from marginalized communities—continue to be disproportionately affected by outdated, punitive discipline models. By requiring the collection and analysis of disaggregated discipline data, **SB68** ensures that restorative practices are implemented equitably—a concern of current disciplinary actions.

The Council supports **SB82** as it aligns with the Council’s Legislative Platform supporting:

- a. Proactive measures to ensure student and school personnel safety and to prevent school violence and vandalism. (Article V, Student Safety and Discipline, Clause A)
- b.
- c. Diverse curricula that allow for specialized areas of study. (Article III, Higher Education, Clause C), and
- d. High standards of learning in all curricula in all schools for all students. (Article III, General, Clause A).

SB68 reflects Maryland’s commitment to supporting, rather than punishing, its students. By fostering stronger relationships, better communication, and a healthier school culture, this bill paves the way for a more inclusive and just education system. For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report on **SB68**. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Qamryn Askew', is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Qamryn Askew
Maryland Youth Advisory Council