

HB0197 Testimony

Public Schools Restorative Practices Schools - Comprehensive Plan

Maryland Association of Student Councils

Mara Babb - State Legislative Affairs Coordinator

Good afternoon Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Mara Babb and I am a student from Montgomery County. I serve as a State Legislative Affairs Coordinator for the Maryland Association of Student Councils, or MASC for short. I sit before you today on behalf of MASC to request a favorable report on House Bill 197.

The Maryland Association of Student Councils is a youth-led organization composed of secondary school student councils across the state advocating for the best interests of all Maryland students. We have passed a resolution in favor of this bill, voted on by a delegation of MASC's elected and appointed officials, voting student delegates, regional student government presidents, and Student Members of Boards of Education from across the state.

MASC calls on the General Assembly to support restorative justice practices within Maryland schools by passing HB197. The Restorative Practices Plan, outlined by the State Department of Education, would allow for the implementation of such practices into Maryland schools in order to further the rehabilitation of young people. This plan moves away from traditionally aggressive disciplinary approaches and gives students the tools they need to succeed both in and outside the classroom.

As a student leadership and advocacy organization, MASC supports “effective restorative justice programs aimed at rehabilitating young people” and “parent/guardian involvement in disciplinary and restorative procedures regarding their student” as outlined in our official Legislative Platform. This bill would create an avenue for school systems to reconstruct discipline in a manner that positively uplifts local communities, reflecting the impact of the various inequities that have led to the introduction of this legislation.

As a State Legislative Affairs Coordinator for MASC and involved student advocate, I have seen the positive impact that restorative practices can have on students, corroborated by academic research. According to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, restorative practices address the root of behavioral issues by tending to students' socio-emotional needs, focusing on the causation between personal life and outward behavior. Moreover, a study conducted by the University of Chicago Education Lab found that Chicago Public Schools saw a 35% reduction in school arrests, significant decreases in violent and nonviolent offenses, and an

improvement in the school environment. The Restorative Practices Plan will uplift students throughout the state and empower them to lead fulfilling and content lives, free from the burden of harsh discipline.

Accordingly, MASC respectfully requests a favorable report on HB197 from the committee. Thank you for your time.