

# MARYLAND COALITION TO REFORM SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

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## HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

### HOUSE BILL 1060: Primary and Secondary Schools - Petitions for Emergency Evaluation - Requirement for Tracking and Reporting and Study

**DATE: March 10, 2026**

**POSITION: FAVORABLE**

The Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline (CRSD) brings together advocates, service providers, and community members dedicated to transforming school discipline practices within Maryland's public school systems. CRSD is committed to the fair and equitable treatment of all students, reducing barriers to learning, and keeping all students on track to graduate, including pregnant or parenting students, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and socio-economic status. **CRSD supports House Bill 1060**, which requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to create and schools to implement a statewide system for tracking and reporting school-initiated petitions for emergency evaluations of students experiencing mental health crises.

**Maryland schools are misusing emergency petitions to remove students from school in response to behavior.** The emergency petition legal process allows an individual to be taken into custody involuntarily and examined by a medical professional in an emergency facility if they are experiencing a mental health crisis that allegedly causes them to present a danger to self or others. Organizational members of CRSD who provide legal representation to students in school discipline matters can attest that students—including children as young as five years old—are being removed from school based on emergency petitions when the underlying issue stems from unmet educational or behavioral support needs rather than a true mental-health crisis. Our members have represented students who were repeatedly removed from school using the emergency petition process while the school simultaneously denied evaluation for special education services or other behavioral supports. While we know that this is happening across school districts, we do not have sufficient data to understand the true scope and impact of this issue.

**The use of emergency petitions to remove students from school can be traumatic and discriminatory.** The use of emergency petitions can be profoundly harmful to children. Students

are often transported from school by police, who sometimes use handcuffs, and without the accompaniment of a parent, guardian, or other trusted adult. This can be frightening, stigmatizing, and traumatic. In other instances we have observed, school administrators threaten to suspend the student unless a parent picks them up from school and transports them to the hospital emergency department. Once transported, children are taken to a hospital emergency room for a psychiatric evaluation, which can lead to missed school in addition to missed work and costly hospital bills for families. In 2017, Wicomico County Public Schools entered into a settlement agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice that required the school district not to misuse emergency petitions after a federal investigation identified discriminatory school discipline practices. Misuse of emergency petitions in school settings is a very serious matter that harms children, creates a lack of safety, and breaks trust between school staff and families.

**House Bill 1060 is necessary to protect students and ensure that Maryland schools are not misusing emergency petitions.** HB 1060 will allow MSDE and other stakeholders to effectively evaluate the use of emergency petitions and design interventions to ensure that schools only use this process when appropriate, and provide other supports when behavior is due to unmet educational and behavioral support needs. HB 1060 requires schools to collect demographic data, disability status, the reason for each petition, who initiated it, whether handcuffs were used, and the outcomes of the evaluation. MSDE must verify data accuracy, compile statewide reports twice yearly, and submit an annual public report disaggregated by school and student characteristics. The bill also establishes a workgroup to study how emergency evaluation petitions are used in school settings and recommend improvements in training, coordination, policy, and statutory frameworks. This statewide data and framework for evaluation is urgently needed to ensure safety and appropriate behavioral supports for Maryland students.

For these reasons, **CRSD urges a favorable committee report on HB 1060.**

For more information contact: Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline at [CRSDMaryland@gmail.com](mailto:CRSDMaryland@gmail.com).

### **CRSD Members**

- Public Justice Center
- Maryland Office of the Public Defender
- Project HEAL (Health, Education, Advocacy, and Law) at Kennedy Krieger Institute
- The Choice Program at UMBC
- Progressive Maryland
- Strong Schools Maryland
- League of Women Voters of Maryland
- Sayra and Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families, Children, and the Courts