

BILL: House Bill 655
TITLE: Education - Student Behavior - Parent and Guardian Notice and Required Counseling (Parent and Guardian Accountability Act)
HEARING DATE: February 18, 2026
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 655. While local boards strongly support meaningful parental engagement and share the goal of addressing violent and disruptive student behavior, this legislation would criminalize a parent's inability to comply with a counseling mandate. Such an approach raises significant policy, fairness, and practicality concerns. This opposition reflects MABE's positions established in its longstanding continuous resolution on Student Discipline policy.

Policy Concerns

Maryland law already provides a comprehensive framework for student discipline that reflects the General Assembly's recognition that principals and superintendents must retain broad discretion to respond to student behavior under § 7-305 of the Education Article. Local boards operate within that statutory and regulatory structure to maintain safe learning environments while balancing due process, equity, and student supports.

MABE's longstanding resolutions affirm support for local flexibility to create and enforce consistent and fair disciplinary standards, and for the adoption of state discipline guidelines that preserve local board and school administrator discretion. House Bill 655 moves in the opposite direction by imposing a statutory mandate that attaches criminal consequences to a prescribed course of action. In doing so, it reduces the ability of local boards and school administrators to respond appropriately and effectively to student discipline situations on a case-by-case basis. Moreover, public policy should encourage partnership with families, not threaten them with court involvement and potential penalties.

Fairness Concerns

MABE's student discipline policy resolution also supports reducing disproportionate and disparate impacts of discipline policies on minority students and students with disabilities. Criminalizing parental noncompliance, as House Bill 655 would do with a counseling mandate, risks exacerbating inequities, particularly for families with fewer resources or limited access to services, language barriers, transportation difficulties, or who work

multiple jobs, or have other obstacles. Rather than advancing equity, the bill may create additional barriers for families already navigating complex challenges.

Restorative and Support-Based Alternatives

Maryland law already requires local boards to incorporate restorative approaches into student discipline policies. These approaches emphasize prevention, accountability, repairing harm, and voluntary participation in resolving conflict. School systems continue to invest in professional development, behavioral supports, and evidence-based interventions that promote safe and supportive school climates.

Strengthening access to counseling and family supports, rather than criminalizing noncompliance, would be more consistent with Maryland's existing discipline framework.

For these reasons, MABE respectfully requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 655.