

BILL: House Bill 1229
TITLE: Restorative Schools Fund and Grants - Establishment
POSITION: SUPPORT
DATE: March 27, 2019
COMMITTEES: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports House Bill 1229.

MABE fully anticipates the need for additional funding to implement restorative approaches with fidelity. Therefore, MABE is supporting passage of House Bill 1229 to establish a grant program to provide funds to local school systems for training on, and implementation and evaluation of, restorative approaches that build and sustain positive learning communities.

MABE agrees that restorative approaches should play an integral role in the administration of Maryland's public schools. Such proactive practices, implemented with fidelity following appropriate professional development and training of all staff, can make significant improvements in school climate and the learning conditions for all students to learn. However, local boards do not agree that such approaches should be a mandated reactive disciplinary response to students engaged in behavior warranting suspension.

Maryland school systems are committed to all of their students becoming college and career ready and ensuring that the appropriate use of school discipline furthers that goal. Following several years of deliberations, the State Board of Education adopted new regulations in 2014 to dramatically reform the ways in which school teachers, principals, and superintendents may suspend or expel students, and define the educational and behavioral supports to be provided to students in disciplinary situations. Therefore, MABE adopted the position of supporting the State Board's initiative to require local boards of education to reform their student discipline policies to:

- prohibit "zero tolerance" policies;
- reflect a philosophy that fosters positive behavior;
- provide continuous education services to all suspended and expelled students; and
- hold school systems accountable for reducing and eliminating disproportionate impacts of student discipline policies on minority students.

MABE believes that the grant program established by this legislation is integral to the successful implementation of restorative approaches, and clearly aligned with the broader policy goal that student discipline policies reflect a philosophy that fosters positive behavior.

For the reasons outlined above, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 1229.