

STUDENT BEHAVIOR & DISCIPLINE

MABE POSITIONS

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education, representing all local boards of education in Maryland:

- ✓ **Supports** local flexibility to adopt and administer equitable student discipline policies and procedures to ensure the rights, dignity, and safety of all students and staff and to provide a school environment conducive to teaching, learning, and social and emotional growth for all students.
- ✓ **Supports** adequate federal, state, and local funding to support any mandated student discipline reforms or behavioral support programs.
- ✗ **Opposes** legislation and regulations that would unduly limit the authority of boards of education or the professional judgment of school administrators.

BACKGROUND

Every local board of education places a high priority on establishing policies and procedures concerning student rights and responsibilities and educationally appropriate disciplinary and behavioral responses when school policies are violated. Maryland's state and local policies on student discipline continues to evolve as changes are adopted by the General Assembly and the State Board of Education.

From 2009 to 2014, the State Board of Education engaged in a comprehensive review and reform of Maryland's student discipline regulations and guidelines. MABE supported the State Board's initiative to require local boards 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.

In 2014, the State Board adopted regulations to mandate new local policies and regulations, including:

- Definitions of expulsion, extended suspension, long-term suspension, and short-term suspension;
- Standards and conditions for excluding students from school through extended suspensions or expulsions;
- Mandates to provide excluded students with educational and behavioral support services;
- Requirements to provide "minimum education services" to students suspended or expelled out of school, including daily classwork and assignments from each teacher that must be reviewed, corrected and returned on a weekly basis;
- Mandates for MSDE to develop a method to analyze whether there is a disproportionate impact on minority students, or a discrepant impact on special education students; and
- The mandate that local boards revise discipline policies and regulations by the 2014-2015 school year.

In 2017, legislation passed to prohibit a child enrolled in a public prekindergarten program through second grade from being suspended or expelled from school, subject to limited exceptions. Under this recent law, the numbers of student suspensions/expulsions in these early grades has been reduced by half. In 2019, a law passed requiring schools to use of restorative approaches to student discipline. Local discipline regulations are now required to state that the primary purpose of any disciplinary measure is rehabilitative, restorative, and educational. In 2020, a new law requires the Maryland State Department of Education to develop guidelines for schools on a trauma-informed approaches. MABE supported this bill based on the growing awareness about the critical and detrimental role that trauma has in the lives and learning of many students; trauma that can impact learning, behavior and relationships in school. MABE looks forward to continued investments and innovations in state and local programs and services to not only better respond to disciplinary infractions but also better prepare educators and other school staff to help students feel supported and safe to learn.

For additional information, see [MABE's Resolution on Student Discipline](#).