



*The Maryland Education Coalition is dedicated to raising the academic achievement of students in Maryland public schools by promoting adequate funding and systemic accountability for improving results.*

**HB 1466**  
**Task Force to Study Restorative Justice Discipline Practices**

**House Ways and Means Committee**  
**March 3, 2016**

**Position: SUPPORT**

Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) members are organizations and persons committed to improving public education in Maryland. Collectively, we represent about 200,000 parents, educators and community members and advocate for more than 850,000 students statewide in more than 950 public schools.

MEC strongly supports HB 1466, Task Force to Study Restorative Justice Discipline Practices in Maryland Public Schools. Among other goals, our coalition advocates for the creation of optimal school climates where students can learn appropriate behavior while remaining within their school communities. Learning environments that best serves Maryland students promote problem-solving skills via conflict resolution and restorative practices, rather than punitive and exclusionary methods of discipline. This Task Force will be given the responsibility to design responses that keep students in school and on-track to graduate, a step forward in creating a school environment that nurtures the strengths of all students and can educate a capable and productive citizenry.

Research shows that greater rates of suspension and arrests lead to increased disengagement and drop-out rates. Such an approach feeds the school-to-prison pipeline and fails to enhance school safety. It disproportionately affects minority children as well.

A statewide focus on restorative practices would place Maryland on a firm path toward reforming school discipline by promoting the relationships within school communities in a way that affords all students an opportunity to graduate ready for college and careers. It would also contribute to making sure that every school in Maryland is a safe space to learn, grow and work.

MEC respectfully recommends that the Task Force consider adding additional members to this Task Force, including a parent selected by the Maryland PTA, in addition to other child advocates. This would maximize the potential of the Task Force to create meaningful reform by including comprehensive perspectives.

MEC believes this Task Force will serve an important role in addressing the inconsistency and disparate impact of discipline practices in schools and the school-to-prison pipeline, while improving education and life outcomes for students.

For these reasons, we urge a **FAVORABLE** report on **HB 1466**.