

**Informational Testimony regarding House Bill 1546
Education—Reportable Offenses—Alterations**

**House Judiciary Committee
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The Maryland State Education Association offers this informational testimony on House Bill 1546, legislation that alters the list of “reportable offenses” that may be reported to school officials and the procedures that must be followed by districts, schools and law enforcement upon receipt of said report.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland’s public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

MSEA members have voiced our strong and unwavering support of efforts to close the school-to-prison pipeline, adamantly believing that the only pipeline we wish to see our students on is the one leading them to college or career and a bright future. We have also been strong advocates for the use of restorative approaches in our schools because we know they have been shown to be transformative in many schools across Maryland and across the nation. We have enthusiastically supported a myriad of efforts and approaches aimed at creating safe and nurturing school environments where teachers can teach and all students can learn. We neither desire nor endorse any action that would stigmatize any student who finds themselves in a negative situation involving the criminal justice system and support efforts to continue to provide academic instruction in an appropriate, yet safe setting for the student in question, other students as well as staff.

While we applaud the required inclusion of student support teams to determine if changes are needed to a student’s educational programming, we are concerned that educators outside of the student support team remain largely ignorant of what is happening with students alleged to be connected to/involved in a situation involving a reportable offense. This information could be crucial as they are tasked with providing a safe and non-disruptive learning environment for all of their students—including the student involved with law enforcement. We are also concerned about the proposed changes to the list of “reportable offenses” as well as the provision rendering the report to the school system a discretionary determination on the part of the State’s Attorney office as opposed to a mandatory report. The school system and administration should be made aware of facts rather than relying on the rumor mill that exists in every school. These facts ensure that the school system, administration, and teachers respond appropriately.



We all recognize the need to keep our young people out of the court room and in the classroom. We must also recognize the importance of ensuring that all members of the school community have a safe learning and working environment in which to function. Finding the right balance is by no means easy. It is, however, essential if we are to provide all of Maryland's children with a world-class education that prepares them for college, career, and life.