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Calvert and St. Mary's Counties

Judicial Proceedings Committee



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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Senate Bill 583 – Maryland Center for School Safety – Public Schools – Reporting of Classroom Disruptions

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to introduce Senate Bill 583 – Maryland Center for School Safety – Public Schools – Reporting of Classroom Disruptions. This bill would require the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) to establish a website for anonymous reporting of classroom disruptions and to refer disruption reports received through this website to the appropriate county's superintendent. The bill would also require the school system to submit a response to this report to MCSS.

This Committee and the Senate have already spent a significant amount of time discussing the importance of classroom discipline and ensuring all students in our State are given the opportunity to have a safe learning environment. Senate Bill 583 is one tool to provide additional oversight for classroom discipline and give Maryland parents confidence that local school systems are promoting an environment that is free of disruption where students are able to safely learn.

Senate Bill 583 would establish a level of oversight that does not currently exist. Incidents that have arisen over the last several years, particularly at the Maryland School for the Deaf as well as with the use of restraint and seclusion in Calvert and Frederick Counties show why there is a need for greater oversight over school discipline. We have seen in these cases how one parent sharing their story with the public often leads to numerous others coming forward. This bill provides for more a proactive reporting mechanism and a detailed response to address to these issues.

Failing to respond to disruptive behavior through appropriate discipline causes a situation in which other students are unable to learn because of one disruptive student. What is far more troubling is that the disruptive student may not have their behavioral needs addressed and will continue to not learn and inhibit the ability of others to receive an education if the behavior is not responded to appropriately. This bill will ensure that Superintendents are aware of behavioral issues in the classroom, and running this initiative through a State entity will ensure proper oversight to have these reports addressed while still leaving the decision making on school discipline to local school systems.

I am also submitting an amendment in response to concerns that I have heard from school systems about this legislation. The amendment defines a disruption as engaging in intentional behavior that distracts from the learning environment or directly affects the safety of others. The amendment also gives local superintendents 90 days, instead of 45 days, to respond to the reported disruption, removes the local Board of Education from the process, and alters the date for the report required under the bill to August 1 to ensure that the report encompasses the entire school year.

I respectfully request a favorable report with amendments on Senate Bill 583. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Bailey".

Senator Jack Bailey