

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the Maryland House
Ways and Means for the Hearing on
Education - Student-Organized Peaceful Demonstrations - Student Discipline and Policy HB0568
SUPPORT**

Free State PTA represents over 50,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. Free State PTA is composed of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. As the state's premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. ***HB 568 , Education - Student-Organized Peaceful Demonstrations - Student Discipline and Policy, aligns with Free State PTA's principle for legislative action which states that parent, family, student and community involvement in education is crucial. Civic action is an important part of a student's education.***

A founding principle of Free State PTA's (FSPTA) mission is to promote the safety and well-being of all children and youth. Senate Bill 568 is consistent with this principle in that it allows for students to engage in organized civic demonstrations in a safe manner, with at least 48 hours notification of their school. The bill requires the school's help in securing a safe location on school grounds, on a bus or at a school sponsored event.

FSPTA believes that student civic engagement should be encouraged so that our youth can voice their concerns. A study published in the journal Child Development¹ points out that engaging in civic activities can have positive effects on teenagers' mental and physical health, specifically voting, volunteering, and activism. Being involved in the community can help reduce depression and lower the chances of unhealthy behavior, such as substance abuse, researchers found. This bill addresses safety concerns and strikes a reasonable balance for the student's safety and their need to use their voice. **Therefore, the Free State PTA urges the passage of HB568.**

Testimony is presented on the behalf of

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¹ <https://injury.research.chop.edu/blog/posts/activism-can-be-good-teens-if-they-receive-support-and-guidance>