



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

MAR 8 2017

Chairman
Derrick Leon Davis
Council Member, District 6

The Hon. Joan Carter Conway, Chair
Senate Ed., Health, and Env. Matters
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991

The Hon. Anne R. Kaiser, Chair
House Ways and Means
Lowe House Office Building, Room 131
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991

Re: **Bill Position** - HB 425/SB 651 (Lierman/Smith) – Public Schools – Suspensions and Expulsions – **SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Conway & Delegate Kaiser:

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Prince George's County Council, to transmit our position on HB 425/SB 651 – Public Schools – Suspensions and Expulsions, which is before you this 2017 General Assembly Session. The Council met on March 7, 2017. The enclosed statement reflects our position as the bill is currently drafted.

The Council appreciates the opportunity to work together with you and your colleagues to address issues important to Maryland citizens and the operation of Prince George's County. Should you have any questions or need additional information please do not hesitate to contact me. For your convenience my office phone number is (301) 952-3426. Thanks again, for favorable consideration of the Council's position.

Sincerely,


Derrick L. Davis
Chair

Enclosure

cc:

Hon. William C. Smith, Jr., District 20
Hon. Brooke E. Lierman, District 46
Hon. Rushern L. Baker, III, County Executive

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THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

(301) 952-3700
County Council

POSITION STATEMENT

(HB 425/SB 651)
Delegate Lierman/
Senator Smith

Public Schools – Suspensions and Expulsions

POSITION:

SUPPORT

HB425/SB651 - Public Schools - Suspensions and Expulsions prohibits a child from being suspended or expelled from a public prekindergarten program. Further, the bill allows a student enrolled in kindergarten or first or second grade to be suspended or expelled if the student knowingly (1) brings a firearm to school or (2) possesses a firearm at school.

Recent data indicates that expulsions and suspensions occur with regularity in preschool settings, which is problematic given that research suggests that these practices often serve to hinder the social-emotional development of a child during this highly formative period. On December 10, 2014, the United States Department of Health and Human Services and the United States Department of Education released a joint letter advising that suspension and expulsion trends “warrant immediate attention from the early childhood and education fields.”ⁱ The letter went on to explain that “[t]he earliest years of a child's life are critical for building the foundation of learning and wellness needed for future success in school and later in life. During these years, children's brains are developing rapidly, influenced by their experiences, both positive and negative.”

According to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), a total of 89 prekindergarten students were suspended or expelled from school in the 2015-2016 school year. This number includes in-school and out-of-school suspensions. The highest amounts were in Prince George's County (17) and Baltimore City (11). Also, MSDE reports that 2,363 students in pre-K through second grade were suspended out of school or expelled during the 2015-2016 school year, an increase of 17.5% over the previous school year.ⁱⁱ We find these numbers to be disturbing and disappointing. While we recognize the need for teachers to maintain control in the classroom in order to progress children academically, helping to develop their social and behavioral skills should also be part of the goal. And, so we believe a more positive approach is needed, one that will not reinforce bad behavior, or expose 3 and 4 year olds to harmful models of problem solving like exclusionary discipline.

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Public Schools – Suspensions and Expulsions – SUPPORT

We look forward to seeing immediate policy changes Statewide in order to fix this trend and protect small children from the negative outcomes associated with removing them from their classrooms. Therefore, the Prince George’s County Council offers its strong **SUPPORT** of this bill and looks forward to a reversal of policy in order to prevent unnecessary suspensions and expulsions, and to improve outcomes for all children in Maryland Public Schools. We respectfully request your favorable consideration of our position.

Prepared by:

Tony Perez
LA Perez Consulting
Jennifer A. Jenkins
On behalf of Prince George’s County Council

ⁱ https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/hhs_and_ed_joint_letter.pdf

ⁱⁱ 2015-2016 Maryland Public School Suspensions, Expulsions, and Health Related Exclusions report