



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Chairman

Derrick Leon Davis

Council Member, District 6

MAR 8 2017

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** - SB 244 (Robinson) – Task Force to Study Suspension Rates of African American Prekindergarten Students – **SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Conway & Delegate Kaiser:

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Prince George's County Council, to transmit our position on SB 244 – Task Force to Study Suspension Rates of African American Prekindergarten Students, 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. Barbara Robinson, District 40

Hon. Rushern L. Baker, III, County Executive

County Administration Building – Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772

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THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

(301) 952-3700
County Council

POSITION STATEMENT

(SB 244)

Senator

Barbara Robinson

Task Force to Study Suspension Rates of African
American Prekindergarten Students

POSITION:

SUPPORT

SB 244 - Task Force to Study Suspension Rates of African American Prekindergarten Students would (1) determine whether African American students are suspended at a higher rate than students of other races, (2) determine the resources available to remedy these suspensions and (3) make recommendations to deter these suspensions.

Recent data indicates that expulsions and suspensions occur with regularity in preschool settings, which is problematic given that research suggests that these practices hinder the social-emotional development of a child during this highly formative period. On December 10, 2014, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education released a letter advising that suspensions and expulsions 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.”

A 2016 report from the Office for Civil Rights within the U.S. Department of Education noted that African American public prekindergarten children in the United States are 3.6 times as likely to receive one or more out-of-school suspensions as White students.ⁱⁱ According to Maryland State Department of Education, a total of 89 prekindergarten students were suspended or expelled from school in the 2015-2016 school year. This includes in-school and out-of-school suspensions. The highest amounts were in Prince George's County (17) and Baltimore City (11). An informal review by this Council of the data within our school system was indeed troubling. And after reviewing statewide statistics and national data, the numbers seem to point to certain groups of children being punished at disproportionately high rates.

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Prince George's County Council

**SB 244 Task Force to Study Suspension Rates of African American Prekindergarten Students –
SUPPORT**

While we support the prohibition of prekindergarten suspensions and expulsions, we recognize that more in-depth review may be necessary in order to effect a Statewide policy change. Therefore, the Prince George's County Council offers its **SUPPORT** for SB244. Studying the suspension rates of prekindergarten students in Maryland as is provided for within the bill, is an important step in determining how to best serve our children and improve their chances for success.

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/ece/hhs_and_ed_joint_letter.pdf

ⁱⁱ <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/Downloads/CRDC-School-Discipline-Snapshot.pdf>