

Maryland Education Coalition

The Maryland Education Coalition is dedicated to raising the academic achievement of students in Maryland public schools by promoting adequate funding and systemic accountability for improving results.

Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee In Opposition of Senate Bill 1033 Public Education – Alternative Schooling

March 20, 2013

Board of Directors:

David Beard, Co-Chair

Rick Tyler, Co-Chair

Charlie Cooper, Secretary

American Association of University
Women (AAUW)

Advocates for Children and Youth
(ACY)

American Civil Liberties Union of
Maryland (ACLU-MD)

League of Women Voters of Maryland
(LWVM)

Maryland Disability Law Center
(MDLC)

Maryland PTA (MD-PTA)

Laura Carr

Carl Stokes

Sharon Rubinstein

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The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) wants to ensure that all children are kept in school and given an opportunity to succeed.

SB 1033 would allow more students to be suspended and expelled for 'misbehavior'. This word lacks a clear definition in the bill and could open the door for more children being pushed out of their school environment. In the 2011-12 school year, over 51,000 individual students were suspended with over 85,000 total suspensions and expulsions. MEC finds these numbers to be quite alarming and any movement to suspend more kids is not a solution to any problem.

In addition, students of color and students with disabilities receive a disproportionate amount of suspensions and expulsions. In particular, African Americans and students with disabilities are three times as likely to receive out-of school punishment. To put it another way, more than 1 in 10 African American students are removed from the classroom compared to 3% of white students. Almost 12% of students with disabilities are removed.

MEC does appreciate the effort to keep suspended kids engaged in learning by providing some sort of educational services; however, creating new alternative programs is costly. In addition, the Children in Needs of Services (CINS) requirement in the bill would also require additional resources given the CINS process is not widely utilized nor adequately funded.

At the direction of the Maryland State Board of Education (MSBE), the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is leading a process inclusive of a broad range of stakeholders to identify best practices that keep more kids learning and improve behavior. MEC and MSDE share a goal of finding effective avenues to keep more kids in school, not to see more kids kept out.

MEC urges the Committee to oppose SB 1033.