Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the
Maryland House of Delegates
Ways and Means Committee
For the Hearing on
Public Schools – Student Misconduct – Parent or Guardian Liability
(HB 865)
February 28, 2019

OPPOSE

Maryland PTA is the state’s oldest and largest child advocacy organization that serves as a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. We represent thousands of volunteer members in 900 public schools and we are comprised of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. For nearly 104 years, our mission has been to make every child’s potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

Maryland PTA submits this testimony in opposition of HB 865, Public Schools - Student Misconduct - Parent or Guardian Liability. This bill seeks to penalize the guardians of a student exercising misconduct. Where the penalties impose a financial burden on the guardians after four violations.

To impose a sanction of this magnitude on the family of a student who is misbehaving would be to support the system of jail and not justice for the students. It is not in line with the system of restorative justice practices which is the methodology many schools have adopted and working toward to keep students in the classroom, and in the school, rather than promoting the school-to-prison pipeline, which the theory of this bill seems to mirror.

While the intent may be to encourage accountability from the student’s guardians to enforce the positive behaviors expected based on the county board’s student code of conduct, it assumes the parents are not already doing what they can to enforce the student’s positive behavior; creating a subjective circumstance for a civil court judge to determine, offloading the overall responsibility to an external correctional mechanism, which has no connection to the school system.

This is not the methodology that is in sync with the current restorative justice mechanism being implemented in schools to encourage students to be more accountable in self-correction, self-control, and self-reliance in making the right decisions to ensure their productivity in school and in the community. Maryland PTA strong opposition of House Bill 865 as it does not mirror the intent of promoting student accountability for their actions by imposing fines on their families for the student’s misconduct. The Association requests an urgent unfavorable report for HB 865.

Testimony is presented on the behalf of

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