



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 655 Education – Student Behavior – Parent and Guardian Notice and Required Counseling (Parent and Guardian Accountability Act)

Position: Unfavorable

By: Linda T. Kohn, President

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The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) is a nonpartisan organization that supports policies that provide an equitable, quality education for all children. LWVMD **opposes** *House Bill 655 – Education – Student Behavior – Parent and Guardian Notice and Required Counseling (Parent and Guardian Accountability Act)*, which requires the parent or guardian of a public school student who engages in “two or more incidents of violent and disruptive behavior” to seek and participate in counseling with the student, and criminalizing those who are unable to do so.

LWVMD supports child centered policies and practices that focus on building positive relationships between the schools, students, and their families. This approach, which is highly punitive, is unlikely to achieve those aims. There are other concerns:

- The bill fails to define “violent and disruptive behavior.” Without a clear definition, decisions to involve parents are more likely to be based on bias that negatively impact some students more than others. Research on disparate discipline in schools consistently finds that black students and students with disabilities are more likely to be disciplined than their peers.¹
- The bill ignores the financial and time constraints of families that can present barriers to actively seeking and engaging in counseling.
- The bill conflicts with existing state polices and recommendations intended to limit the use of exclusionary discipline and to expand preventative and restorative approaches to school discipline.²
- The bill ignores research that documents the negative consequences of punitive disciplinary practices.

For these reasons, LWVMD urges an unfavorable report on HB655.

¹ Maryland State Department of Education. (October 2025). *Suspensions by school and major offense category: In-school and out-of-school suspensions and expulsions.*

<https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/documents/dcaa/ssp/20242025student/2025-student-suspensions-by-school-combined-a.pdf>

² Maryland Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (October 2019). *Disparities in school discipline in Maryland.* <https://www.usccr.gov/files/pubs/2020/01-14-MD-SAC-School-Discipline-Report.pdf>