



SB0367 - State Department of Education - Guidelines on Trauma-Informed Approach

Presented to Hon. Paul Pinsky and
Members of the Senate Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committee
March 3, 2020 1:00 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges the Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committee a favorable report on SB0367 – State Department of Education – Guidelines on Trauma-Informed Approach**, sponsored by Senator Mary Washington.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice for all Marylanders. Improving the ways to better understand how young people realize their educational goals amid challenging family and life dynamics is integral in achieving this goal, as access to and the completion of one's education informs reproductive decision-making well into adulthood. Expanding the use of trauma-informed approaches and policies in school environments positively affects both the health and education of Maryland youth.

One out of every four children attending school are exposed to trauma and traumatic events – abuse, neglect, poverty, discrimination, witnessing violence, etc. – which adversely impacts a student's ability to learn and focus in school.¹ The cognitive, emotional, and social impacts of trauma can range from depression, anxiety, aggression, and post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD), as well as rejection from peers.² In the 2016 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), 18.2% of Maryland high school students reported experiencing bullying on school property, 17.3% contemplated suicide, 12.2% were in a physical altercation on campus, and only 55.1% reported that they felt teachers truly cared about their wellbeing.³ Behavior exhibited in reaction to trauma often results in increased disciplinary actions and pushout from school due for disrupting the educational environment. Many schools in the U.S. suspend hundreds of students. However, only a reported 5% are suspended for possession of weapons or drugs, while the majority are suspended for disruptive behaviors.⁴

By expanding the use of the trauma-informed approaches used in schools, intensively training school staff on these approaches, and developing guidelines to assist schools with implementation, a sense of safety and community can be developed among students. SB0367 has the potential to create inclusive, understanding, and supportive school climates for all Maryland students. As such, it will allow students to thrive, become prepared for their futures, and have the power to make informed, long-standing decisions about their lives - including if, when, and how to form their own families. For these reasons, **NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges a favorable committee report on SB0367**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2008). *Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators*. <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/child-trauma-toolkit-educators>

² Jorgensen, Jeff. (2016). The Effects of Trauma-Focused Therapies on School Performance: A Systematic Review. Sophia, the St. Catherine University https://sophia.stkate.edu/msw_papers/611

³ Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2016). <https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/ccdpc/Reports/Pages/yrebs.aspx>

⁴ The Civil Rights Project (2011). National Education Policy Center. <https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/discipline-policies>