



SPONSOR: Sen. Townsend & Rep. S. Moore

DELAWARE STATE SENATE
152nd GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 119

ESTABLISHING THE STUDENT BEHAVIOR AND SCHOOL CLIMATE TASK FORCE.

1 WHEREAS, all students and educators deserve learning and working environments that are safe, inclusive,
2 supportive, and fair; and

3 WHEREAS, while educators across the nation are working to provide safe and secure learning environments for
4 students, issues related to student behavior and school climate present significant challenges to student learning conditions,
5 educator working conditions, and the safety of students and educators; and

6 WHEREAS, according to the Delaware Department of Education's 2023 School Discipline Improvement Program
7 summary report, the total number of students suspended, total number of days suspended, and total number of suspensions
8 all increased for the 2022-2023 school year as compared to the 2021-2022 school year; and

9 WHEREAS, a 2022 American Psychological Association study found that nearly half of the teachers surveyed
10 indicated a desire or plan to quit or transfer jobs due to school climate and safety issues; and

11 WHEREAS, the National Association of School Principals Framework for Effective School Discipline cites key
12 components of effective school discipline, including clearly defined behavioral expectations that are taught and consistently
13 reinforced, data-based decision making within a multidisciplinary problem-solving team, a tiered system of behavioral
14 supports to meet the needs of each student, and ongoing, job-embedded professional development to increase school staff
15 capacity to implement effective, positive, and equitable discipline that reinforces culturally responsive positive discipline
16 techniques and helps to mitigate bias; and

17 WHEREAS, zero-tolerance policies, aggressive policing in schools, and other extreme school discipline practices
18 lead to high rates of suspensions, expulsions, and arrests of students, causing large numbers of students to be pushed out of
19 school and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems, fueling the school-to-prison pipeline; and

20 WHEREAS, according to the 2021 American Institute for Research study of New York City public schools,
21 exclusionary discipline does not serve as a deterrent to students' future behavior and may exacerbate it in younger students,
22 nor does it improve students' or teachers' perceptions of school climate; and

23 WHEREAS, harsh or unfair discipline practices can contribute to students feeling unwelcome, unsafe, and
24 unsupported; and

WHEREAS, when students feel uncomfortable in their school environment, schools miss crucial opportunities to support students with the social, emotional, physical, academic, and mental health support they need to be on a path to success; and

WHEREAS, though Delaware provides some funding and support to districts through the Comprehensive School Discipline Improvement Program under the Department of Education, there is a need to examine the current funding levels and support offered to districts; and

WHEREAS, schools can both keep their school community safe while ensuring every student is included, supported, and treated fairly; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly is committed to addressing student learning and safety in a comprehensive way; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly is committed to addressing recruitment and retention challenges among the educator workforce in a comprehensive way; and

WHEREAS, convening a broad group of stakeholders for purposes of examining the extent of and solutions to challenges involving student behavior and school climate throughout Delaware, including identifying and replicating effective programs and best practices in Delaware and beyond, is an important component of the General Assembly's commitment to a comprehensive, effective approach.

NOW, THEREFORE:

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the 152nd General Assembly of the State of Delaware, the House of Representatives concurring therein, that the Student Behavior and School Climate Task Force ("Task Force") is hereby created.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Task Force comprises the following voting members, or a designee selected by a member serving by virtue of position:

(1) Two State Senators from the Majority Caucus, appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, one of whom is appointed as Co-Chair of the Task Force.

(2) Two State Representatives from the Majority Caucus, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom is appointed as Co-Chair of the Task Force.

(3) A State Senator from the Minority Caucus, appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

(4) A State Representative from the Minority Caucus, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(5) The Secretary of the Department of Education.

- (6) The Secretary of the Department for Children, Youth & Their Families.
- (7) The President of the Delaware State Education Association.
- (8) The President of the Delaware School Boards Association.
- (9) The President of the Delaware Association of School Administrators.
- (10) The President of the Delaware Chief School Officers Association.
- (11) A Co-Chair of the Special Education Strategic Plan Advisory Council, to be appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
- (12) Three School District Superintendents representing a school in each county, to be appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
- (13) Three public school classroom educators who teach in a Title 1 school or are a member of a class protected from discrimination under Delaware and Federal laws and regulations, representing a school in each county, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- (14) One school-based mental health professional, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- (15) One school resource officer, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- (16) One education support professional, to be appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
- (17) One school transportation worker, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- (18) A parent or guardian of a student currently attending a Delaware public school, to be appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
- BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall study the needs and options of students and educators to improve student behavior and school climate policies. The Task Force shall examine and recommend a course of legislative, regulatory, and operational action that considers or addresses all of the following:
- (1) The causes of student behavior issues, including the connection between student behavior and the social determinants of learning.
- (2) The impact of student behavior issues on student learning, including for the individual student with behavior issues as well as for their classmates.
- (3) The impact of student behavior issues on educators' job satisfaction and retention.
- (4) The effectiveness of current school discipline policies and initiatives in preventing and addressing student behavior issues, including restorative practices as adopted in Delaware and other jurisdictions.

(5) Adoption of data-driven, developmentally-appropriate school discipline policies and interventions to improve school climate in Delaware schools.

(6) Effective school policies related to engaging families in the process of addressing student behavior issues.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that:

(1) Official action by the Task Force, including making findings and recommendations, requires the approval of a majority of the members of the Task Force.

(2) The Task Force may adopt rules necessary for its operation.

(3) The co-chairs of the Task Force are responsible for guiding the administration of the Task Force by doing, at a minimum, all of the following:

a. Notifying individuals of their selection to serve on the task force, and setting a date, time, and place for the initial organizational meeting.

b. Supervising the preparation and distribution of meeting notices, agendas, minutes, correspondence, and reports of the Task Force.

c. Sending to the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Director of the Division of Research of Legislative Council, after the first meeting of the Task Force, a list of the members of the Task Force and the person who appointed them.

d. Providing meeting notices, agendas, and minutes to the Director of the Division of Research of Legislative Council.

e. Ensuring that the final report of the Task Force is submitted to the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, with copies to all members of the General Assembly; the Governor; The Director and the Librarian of the Division of Research of Legislative Council; and the Delaware Public Archives.

(4) The Task Force shall hold its first meeting no later than April 8, 2024.

(5) The Department of Education shall provide the necessary support and staff for the Task Force to carry out its mission.

(6) The co-chairs of the Task Force shall compile a report containing a summary of the Task Force's work regarding the issues assigned to it, including any findings and recommendations related to those issues, and submit the report no later than November 1, 2024.

SYNOPSIS

This concurrent resolution establishes the Student Behavior and School Climate Task Force.

Author: Senator Townsend