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Testimony before the Ways and Means Committee

In OPPOSITION to

House Bill 381- Baltimore County Public Schools- Student Misconduct- Penalty for Parent or Guardian

**Shamoyia Gardiner, Education Policy Senior Associate, Advocates for Children and Youth
February 14, 2019**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 381- Baltimore County Public Schools- Student Misconduct- Penalty for Parent or Guardian. Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) is opposed to this bill.

While ACY recognizes the value of teaching students that bullying and harassment are not acceptable behaviors, **we do not believe that levying a \$1,000 fine against students' families is the most effective way to encourage desired behavior.** *In loco parentis* refers to the legal responsibility of school to operate in the place of a parent for students. While schools have authority over students, it is irresponsible and illogical to attempt to translate that power into the financial extortion of students' families.

Additionally, this bill, though approached from a race-neutral perspective, **will have disproportionately negative consequences across racial and socio-economic lines.** Students of color, particularly Black students, are disproportionately represented in statewide school discipline data, often for offenses that are entirely subjective.¹ Nonwhite parents tend to be employed in fields that offer low hourly wages and few, if any, benefits.² It's not difficult to see that this legislation is poised to further some disturbing disparities in school discipline while spilling over into the finances of families.

SB 578 would impose a fine on families that may jeopardize their economic stability. While ACY recognizes the importance of immediately condoning negative behavior like bullying and harassment, we do not believe that the bill achieves its intended ends without significant potential for harm to the economic stability of the students' families. As such, **we urge an unfavorable report on this bill.**

¹ Maryland State Department of Education. 2015-2016 Student Suspension Data.

² Center for American Progress. "When a Job is not Enough" December 5, 2018.



