

Lisa Cataldi

From: Stephanie Meuse <stephanie.s.meuse@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 27, 2021 6:48 PM
To: House Education Committee
Cc: Rep. Ranglin-Vassell, Marcia R.
Subject: Stephanie Meuse for Bill 5933

Hi,

My name is Stephanie Meuse, an East Providence resident, organizer behind Safe Return to School RI and 4th grade teacher in Central Falls. I am writing today in support of the addition of Section 1 part c to House Bill 5933 which relates to out of school suspensions.

Years of research shows that out of school suspensions are associated with low achievement, poor attendance, and juvenile crime - the recipe for the often talked about "school to prison pipeline." Out of school suspensions have long been used as a catch all discipline for "willful defiance" in school. Beyond having negative affects on students' longterm individual outcomes, they also undermine positive school culture. Nationwide, many schools have shifted away from relying on suspensions for discipline to implementing restorative justice with positive results.

While still restorative justice practices are fairly new in education, in 2019 the RAND corporation released the results of two major studies and the first glimpse at results of schools that implemented restorative justice were positive. Students who reported experiencing more restorative practices reported experiencing greater empathy, stronger social skills, less bullying (cyber and physical), greater peer attachment, a stronger connection to their schools and a more positive school climate (characterized by teacher support, clarity and consistency of rules, and student input into classroom decisions).

Their recommendations, which I strongly suggest this body of legislators to consider, was to make mandatory and fully fund regular, high quality restorative justice education for school staff.

I hope you will consider voting to pass this positive addition to House Bill 5933 and want to thank Representative Ranglin-Vassell for her invaluable, tireless work on behalf of our state's children.

Thank you,
Stephanie Meuse