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ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT

**TESTIMONY ON 22 – H 6667,
AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION – HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS – TRAUMA
INFORMED SCHOOLS ACT
January 26, 2022**

As our schools and educational institutions build towards equity, it is critical that disciplinary measures be minimized as much as possible as a component of this process. It is for this reason that we are supportive of this legislation which would implement trauma informed services for students in schools, and are particularly supportive of the provision within this bill which seeks to avoid “harsh” or “punitive” disciplinary actions.

Our organization has followed for years the alarming disparities which are evident in the imposition of out-of-school suspensions, especially for BIPOC students and students with disabilities. H 6667 recognizes that such discipline must be avoided, especially for students who may be responding to their academic experiences with the perspective of their trauma, and who need behavioral and social-emotional support services – rather than severe disciplinary protocol – to appropriately address their actions.

Comprehensive supports that are inclusive, culturally competent, and appropriately responsive to a student’s individual needs are critical to the creation of an academic infrastructure that is built on equity and does not over-rely on punitive disciplinary actions. We therefore support this legislation which would center student needs in such a manner.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Submitted by: Hannah Stern, Policy Associate