



128 Dorrance Street, Suite 400
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 831-7171
Fax: (401) 831-7175
www.riaclu.org
info@riaclu.org

ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT

**TESTIMONY ON 21 – H 5936,
AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION – HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS – TRAUMA
INFORMED SCHOOLS ACT
April 28, 2021**

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 particularly of the provision within this bill which seeks to avoid “harsh” or “punitive” disciplinary actions.

In our testimony on another bill being heard today – H 5933 – which concerns the imposition of out-of-school suspensions for students, we detailed the alarming disparities which are evident in disciplinary practices, especially for BIPOC students and students with disabilities. H 5936 further recognizes that, 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, such discipline must be avoided.

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