

US House of Representatives
Washington, DC

Representative Mike Doyle:

I request that you co-sponsor Representative Ayanna Pressley's bill, The Ending Punitive, Unfair, School-Based Harm that is Overt and Unresponsive to Trauma (PUSHOUT) Act H.R.5325 to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline. This bill is to combat the disproportionately punitive discipline of Black and Brown students in school. The bill, co-sponsored by Representative Ilhan Omar, focuses on three main sections,

- Establishing \$2.5 billion in new federal grants to support states and schools that commit to ban unfair and discriminatory school discipline practices and improve school climates
- Protecting the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) and strengthening the Department of Education's (ED) Office of Civil Rights (OCR)
- Establishing a Federal Interagency Taskforce to End School Pushout and examine its disproportionate impact on girls of color,

Per 2019 data, Black students in Allegheny County are suspended at nearly 10 times the rate of their White peers. Suspensions cause students to lose critical learning time, fall behind in their studies, and increase the likelihood of dropping out of school. Black and brown students have the right to be in a safe and supportive environment where they can learn to their full potential.

Per 2019 data, for Black students in Allegheny County, the suspension rate was 39 suspensions for every 100 students, compared to a rate of only 4 for White students.

As you may be aware, girls of color in Pennsylvania are more than five times more likely than White girls to be suspended, and often for the same behavior displayed by their White peers.

One barrier that is prevalent for all girls of color, the Women's Law Center report underscores, is implicit and explicit bias based on racist and sexist stereotypes. And as Monique Morris, president and CEO of the National Black Women's Justice Institute and author of "Pushout" states, it starts as early as preschool, with Black girls making up 20 percent of girls enrolled but 54 percent of girls suspended from preschool.

As I'm sure you recognize, taking students out of school during the critical learning years seriously disadvantages Black girls. In addition, suspensions are linked to higher rates of dropout and juvenile justice involvement.

I am asking you to take a stand for more just discipline practices and co-sponsor the PUSHOUT Act