

An Act Enhancing Learning in the Early School Years Through a Ban on School Exclusion in Pre-Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade

H.453 (Rep. Decker) / S.289 (Sen. Gomez)



The Young Student Exclusion Ban Act aims to improve educational outcomes by banning Massachusetts public schools from suspending or expelling students in grades pre-K through 3rd grade for non-serious disciplinary infractions. [1] The bill expands this exclusion ban to 4th grade after one year after enactment, and to 5th grade two years after enactment.

Why is a ban on exclusionary discipline necessary?

- Exclusionary discipline rates **go up every year** as students get older.
- Excluding students from school early predicts expulsion or suspension in later grades and contributes to students' **poor academic performance and failing to graduate on time**. [3]
- The early grades are the most essential time when children need to be in the classroom, as they build their educational foundation and learn to read. For example, **three-fourths of students who are poor readers in 3rd grade will remain poor readers in high school**. [4]

What are the alternatives?

- This bill requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary education to provide guidance and support to school districts and school staff on alternatives to suspension and expulsion such as **restorative justice and other forms of conflict resolution**.
- Alternatives like restorative practices are particularly important now, as young students return from the traumatic experience of virtual learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Has this ever been done before? YES!

- During the 2019-2020 school year, Massachusetts' largest public school district – Boston Public Schools – instituted a ban on the suspension of all students in grades kindergarten through 2nd grade and banned suspensions of 3rd through 5th grade students for non-serious offenses.
- **Nine other states and 10 municipalities have already instituted similar bans** on the use of exclusionary discipline for young students. *It's time for the state of Massachusetts to catch up!*

Questions? Contact Kayla Pulliam at kayla@massappleseed.org or Leon Smith at leonsmith@cfjj.org.

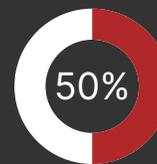
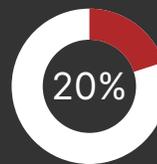
IN MASSACHUSETTS



Black children in kindergarten through 3rd grade are over 4x more likely to experience exclusionary discipline than white students, and Latinx children are almost 3x more likely.

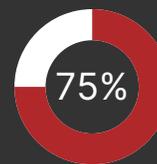
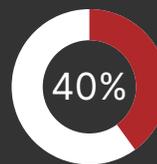


Children with disabilities



only account for roughly 20% of students in these early grades statewide, but comprise nearly 50% of the early-grade disciplined population.

Economically disadvantaged children



account for roughly 40% of MA public school students in preschool through 3rd grade, but comprise over 75% of the total population excluded from the classroom because of discipline. [2]

[1] Serious offenses include possession of a weapon, possession of drugs, assault of school faculty, or a felony charge.

[2] All data listed here is based upon the 2018-2019 school year.

[3] Dolores A. Stegelin, Institute for Child Success, "Preschool Suspension and Expulsion: Defining the Issues," (December 2018) <https://www.instituteforchildsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/ICS-2018-PreschoolSuspensionBrief-WEB.pdf>; Linda Raffaele Mendez, New Directions for Youth Development, "Predictors of suspension and negative school outcomes: A longitudinal investigation" (February 2003).

[4] Annie E. Casey Foundation, Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters (2010) <https://www.aecf.org/resources/early-warning-why-reading-by-the-end-of-third-grade-matters/>