



Education, Not Exclusion!



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An Act to Help Students Stay in School

Overview

An Act to Help Students Stay in School, H. 3435, targets zero tolerance policies that cause unnecessary and lengthy school exclusions (suspensions and expulsions), creating high dropout rates and a high likelihood of entering the juvenile justice system for the students unfairly subject to these provision. Support our bill: convince Massachusetts to change its unduly harsh school discipline laws and help students stay in school.

Learn More

- ◆ Download the Stay in School [Fact Sheet](#).
- ◆ Read text of [H. 3435](#) as filed with the Massachusetts legislature.
- ◆ [Compare](#) the proposed legislation to [current law](#).

Contact Our Team Leaders

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Key Provisions of the Act

- ♦ A limitation on “zero tolerance” exclusions to those felonies or felony delinquency charges that involve violence toward a person, use of a dangerous weapon, sexual assault, or trafficking in a controlled substance.
- ♦ A 90-school-day cap on all student exclusions (with the exception of firearm violations, which carry a cap of 180 school days).
- ♦ A determination before suspending a student for more than 10 school days that clear and convincing evidence supports a conclusion that the student knowingly or intentionally committed any of the zero tolerance infractions, that there is a substantial likelihood the misconduct will recur, and that the student's continued presence in school would have a “substantial detrimental effect” on the general welfare of the school.
- ♦ A written explanation when excluding a student for more than 10 school days.
- ♦ A right of appeal to the Commissioner of the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education after a decision to exclude a child is made at the school district level.
- ♦ Annual reports by school districts including the number of disciplinary exclusions, the duration of each exclusion, the reason for each exclusion, the alternative education options provided to students and the number of students re-admitted.

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Prevent unfair and unnecessary school exclusions.

Protect our future.

Support An Act To Help Students Stay in School!



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Community Supporters

The following Massachusetts organizations endorse our efforts to help students stay in school:

- Adelante, Inc.
- American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts (ACLUM)
- Asian American Legal Defense Education Fund (AALDEF)
- Beverly Bootstraps Community Services
- Boston Asian Youth Essential Service
- Brockton Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- Center for Collaborative Education
- Center for Public Representation (CPR)
- Children's Law Center of Massachusetts (CLCM)
- Citizens for Juvenile Justice (CfJJ)
- Citizens for Public Schools (CPS)
- Coalition Against Poverty
- Community Legal Services & Counseling Center (CLSACC)
- Compass Youth Program of Action, Inc.
- Disability Law Center (DLC)
- East Boston Ecumenical Community Council
- Family and Children's Service of Greater Lynn
- Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action (JALSA)
- La Vida, Inc.
- Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights under Law of the Boston Bar Association
- Lynn Community Connections Coalition
- Lynn Economic Opportunity, Inc.
- Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC)
- Massachusetts Appleseed
- Massachusetts Bar Association
- Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI)
- Medical Legal Partnership for Children
- Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee (MHLAC)
- MetroWest Legal Services (MWLS)
- My Turn
- NAACP New England Area Conference
- Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS)
- Operation Bootstrap
- Parent Professional Advocacy League (PAL)
- Project HIP-HOP
- The Highlands Coalition
- The School Therapy Group
- South Coastal Counties Legal Services (SCCLS)
- Straight Ahead Ministries, Inc. - Lynn Youth Reentry Project
- Youth Empowerment Services, Inc.
- Western Massachusetts Legal Services (WMLS)

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Additional Materials

Click the links below to be taken to downloadable handouts.

- ♦ [Testimony of Thomas Mela \(Massachusetts Advocates for Children\) from the November 10, 2009 legislative hearing on H.3435 before the Joint Committee on Education.](#)
- ♦ [An Excerpt from the Massachusetts Dropout Commission report \(Section on School Discipline\), dated October 2009, pp. 21-22.](#)
- ♦ [American Psychological Association \(APA\) 2006 Report on Zero Tolerance Policies.](#)
- ♦ [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\) 2003 Policy Statement on Out-of-School Suspension and Expulsion.](#)
- ♦ [Southern Poverty Law Center 2009 Article Entitled "Pushed Out."](#)
- ♦ [New York Times Editorial, "The Trouble With 'Zero Tolerance' ", dated November 11, 2009](#)
- ♦ [Annotated Bibliography of Additional Research](#)
- ♦ [Boston Globe, Letter to the Editor, "Zero-tolerance policies can turn students into dropouts", dated November 21, 2009](#)
- ♦ [New York Times Editorial, "Over-Punishment in Schools", dated November 29, 2009](#)

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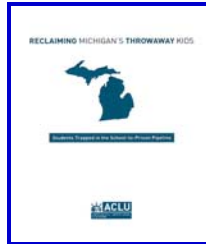
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Resources

School exclusion is ineffective in solving discipline problems and has a significant negative impact on students. Read more...



Michigan—School-to-Prison Pipeline

An ACLU report notes significant racial disparities in choice of punishment for the same offense, and clear indication that Michigan school districts push kids out of

- [Download the report.](#)

Connecticut—Keeping Kids in Line and in School

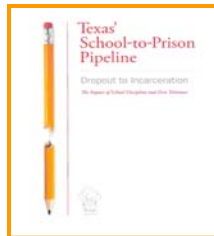
The Washington Post reports on one principals extraordinary efforts to improve order and discipline in his school while cutting suspension rates by 66%.

- [Read the article.](#)

Keeping Discipline In-House

by Nelson Hernandez

Washington Post
June 15, 2009



Texas—School-to-Prison Pipeline

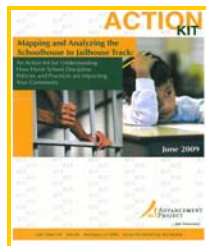
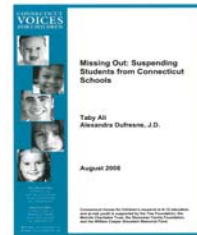
Texas Appleseed reports on the steady stream of students from the school discipline system to the criminal justice system.

- [Download the report.](#)

Connecticut—Serious Suspension Problem

Connecticut Voices for Children documents the serious problem that the overuse of exclusions causes for low income and minority students.

- [Download the report.](#)



School-to-Prison Pipeline Action Kit

The Advancement Project provides tools for analyzing the effects of harsh discipline problems on your community and how to take action against it.

- [Download the action kit.](#)

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