



Date:

Dear _____:

The Dignity in Schools Campaign (DSC) supports the substantive message and goal of the Positive Behavior for Effective Schools Act (H.R. 3407, S.B. 2111) and would like to make several recommendations to strengthen the content and language of the bills.

The recommendations proposed by DSC members are threefold.

First, the Act primarily emphasizes the use of Positive Behavior Support (PBS) by schools as an effective preventive approach to school discipline. In addition to PBS, there are many effective evidence-based measures that schools can use, such as conflict resolution, mediation, and restorative practices. **The DSC hopes the bill can support a broad range of preventive approaches and interventions, in addition to PBS.**

Second, the Act does not include important references to the disproportionate impact of zero-tolerance discipline policies on students of color and students with disabilities. The higher rates of suspensions and expulsions among these students indicate problems that require a more diverse range of policy responses, including measures to address potential cultural biases and misunderstandings held by teachers and school personnel. **DSC members recommend that the Act cite findings to highlight the disproportionate negative impact of zero-tolerance and other ineffective disciplinary practices on students of color and students with disabilities. The Act should also include language that supports quality cultural competency training for teachers.**

Third, Section 2(a) (1) of both S.B. 2111 and H.R. 3407 identifies a lack of school discipline as a leading challenge facing schools, but does not speak to the poor quality of current school disciplinary practices. The DSC feels that it is necessary to clarify that the issue is not that school discipline is nonexistent, but that the current policies in place are ineffective and insufficient, as referenced in Section 2 (a) (2). Furthermore, DSC feels this section should reflect that discipline is one of many challenges facing schools, but not necessarily the leading challenge. **DSC members recommend clarifying the language of the Act by modifying Section 2 (a) (1) for both bills as follows:**

“Educators, parents, and the general public cite ineffective school discipline policies as a leading challenge facing many public schools.”

DSC members ask you to consider these recommended changes to the Positive Behavior for Effective Schools Act to ensure that its content encompasses the broader disciplinary challenges faced by public schools and that all students are treated with dignity and respect.

Sincerely,
The Dignity in Schools Campaign