



Date:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

We, the members of the Dignity in Schools Campaign (DSC), support the **Positive Behavior for Effective Schools Act (H.R. 3407, S.2111)** to fund school intervention programs that create positive learning environments and keep children in school.

DSC is a national coalition of policy advocates, parent and student organizers, educators, and lawyers united in a campaign to challenge the systemic problem of pushout in our nation's schools and to advocate for the human right of every child to a quality education and to be treated with dignity.

Ineffective school discipline practices are one of the leading challenges affecting our schools' ability to educate children. While we all want to keep our schools safe, too many schools are expelling, suspending, or having our students arrested for what used to be called minor misbehavior. In Alabama, a female high school student was sent to alternative school for drug use after taking Motrin to relieve cramps. In New York, a female middle school student was arrested for writing "okay" on her desk. In New Mexico, an 8-year-old male student was arrested after throwing a basketball at another child.

Nationally, over three million children are suspended from school each year. Research shows that students who are suspended or expelled are more likely to drop out or become involved in the juvenile or criminal justice system. **High school students are twice as likely to drop out, if arrested, and four times as likely to drop out, if they appear before a court.** Research also tells us that students of color receive harsher punishments than their white peers for similar misbehavior, and that students with disabilities are more likely to enter the juvenile justice system than their non-disabled peers because of ineffective discipline practices.

Ill-advised disciplinary practices deny our children their fundamental rights as human beings to a quality education and to be treated with dignity. Our communities, economy, and sense of public safety cannot bear their impact.

The Positive Behavior for Effective Schools Act offers an immediate way to improve school discipline. The Act enables schools to use Title I funds to implement evidence-based intervention programs, including Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) – a process proven to reduce school discipline problems while improving student achievement. Schools which have implemented PBIS have demonstrated: reduced office referral rates of up to 50% per year, improved attendance and engagement, **improved academic achievement, reduced dropout rates**, reduced special education referrals, and reduced rates of later delinquency and drug use.

Positive and preventive approaches to school discipline are necessary to ensure that our children attend school in an environment that protects their inherent dignity and provides them with an education aimed at their full academic, social, and emotional development. Please support the bill and give our schools the tools they need to keep our schools safe and our students learning in them.

Sincerely,  
The Dignity in Schools Campaign