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Civil Rights Groups Send Letter to Prince George's County Public Schools Demanding Changes to Discipline Policies and Practices

Several state and national civil rights groups sent a [letter](#) today to Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) demanding changes to discipline policies and practices that disproportionately impact students of color and students with disabilities.

Although Black students account for 58 percent of student enrollment in PGCPS, they make up 78 percent of those experiencing out-of-school removals. Similarly, students with Individualized Education Plans comprise only 11 percent of enrollment, but 24 percent of those removed. These statistics underscore persistent, systemic violations outlined in the letter, including that PGCPS fails to comply with Maryland state discipline law and regulations, and that it does not meet its obligations to students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The letter also asserts that PGCPS' policies and practices are at odds with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Despite these problems, the letter's signatories believe the district can move forward in a positive and meaningful direction. Building on PGCPS Chief Executive Dr. Goldson's acknowledgement of these deep-seated issues in the [Washington Post](#), the letter calls for seven immediate actions the County must take, including:

- Revising its policies and procedures to align with Maryland and federal law;
- Providing comprehensive training and accountability for staff on law governing student discipline, the use of school police and security referrals, the PGCPS student code of conduct, use of force, and the effective implementation of alternatives to exclusionary discipline;
- Analyzing and using relevant data on suspension, expulsion, alternative school enrollment, and racial and disability-based disparities in discipline to inform further improvements to policy and practice;
- Significantly expanding programming and staffing in the area of restorative practices, and other alternatives to exclusionary discipline;
- Strengthening practices and resources for screening for suspected disabilities among students exhibiting behavioral challenges, and implementing effective special education supports for such students; and
- Meaningfully engaging key stakeholders, including affected students, parents, and their representatives and advocates, in this process of discipline reform.

The letter was signed by the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), the Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Disability Rights Maryland, the National Center for Youth Law, and the Public Justice Center.

Read the full letter [here](#).

Read LDF's report on disproportionate school discipline in Baltimore that pushes Black girls out of the classroom and into the juvenile justice system [here](#).

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Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation's first civil and human rights law organization and has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights. LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF.

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