

Wilmington, Delaware
May 17, 2018

#4523

Sponsor:

Council
President
Shabazz

Co-Sponsors:

Council
Members
Chukwuocha
Harlee
Dixon
Walsh
Oliver

WHEREAS, according to data from the U.S. Department of Education, more than 3 million students in grades K-12 were suspended in the 2015-16 school year, more than double the rate in the 1970s. “Zero tolerance” policies, which refer to wide-ranging policies and practices that mandate the removal of students from school for both severe and minor offenses, have resulted in a disproportionate number of children of color suspended, expelled, and referred to law enforcement; and

WHEREAS, according to the Center for American Progress, 250 preschoolers are suspended or expelled every day, more than three times higher than school-aged children. Data presented by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) reveal that African American children represented 18 percent of public preschool enrollment, but 48 percent of preschoolers receiving multiple out-of-school suspensions; and

WHEREAS, of the approximately 50,000 suspensions throughout the State of Delaware in the 2015-16 school year, just over 7 percent of those were for students in pre-kindergarten through second grade. Although enrollment for students in pre-K through second grade is down 4% since 2015, suspensions among this group have increased by 30% during that same period; and

WHEREAS, students of color are disproportionately dealt the harshest exclusionary penalties—expulsions and out-of-school suspensions. In the 2016-17 school year, nearly 2,500 Delaware students in pre-K through second grade received out-of-school suspensions, forcing them to miss academic instruction that was vital to their long-term academic achievement.

Suspending children – sometimes for minor infractions – criminalizes them instead of providing them with supportive and inclusive school environments; and

WHEREAS, the philosophy of restorative justice practices as an alternative to harmful, racially biased zero-tolerance policies, reaffirms a growing movement to institutionalize peaceful and non-punitive approaches for addressing harm and behavior. Intervening with youth and families at the first sign of at-risk behaviors embodies the mission The Wilmington Community Advisory Council (WCAC), formerly known as the CDC Community Advisory Council. Relatively informal practices, such as restorative dialogue, classroom circles and peer courts promote community building and tasks students with discussing issues with those with whom they experienced conflict.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON, that Council encourages the elimination pre-K through second grade out-of-school suspensions and urges school districts to invest in additional training and resources to support schools as they move away from discriminatory and punitive discipline measures and toward restorative practices.

Passed by City Council,
May 17, 2018

Attest: Maribel Seijo
City Clerk

SYNOPSIS: This Resolution calls for the elimination of pre-Kindergarten through second grade out-of-school suspensions. Further, this Resolution encourages school districts to explore and utilize restorative practices as an alternative to traditional school disciplinary measures to ensure consequences are applied to a child's misbehavior in a way that supports personal growth and positive learning opportunities for all students.