



EQUITY IN EDUCATION

C O A L I T I O N

From: Sharonne Navas, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Equity in Education Coalition

Date: February 6, 2017

Re: Senate Bill 5155

The **Equity In Education Coalition** is Washington State's largest coalition of stakeholders from communities of color and white allies who are striving to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for children of color.

The Equity in Education Coalition is strongly urging that Senate Bill 5155 be moved out of the Senate Early Learning and K-12 committee because it addresses a huge issue surrounding inequitable access to education and the unfair practice of suspending or expelling a young child.

The Problem:

- Over 4,000 children in kindergarten through second grade were suspended or expelled from Washington schools during the 2015-2016 school year.
- Often, young students are suspended for behaviors that are a **product of normal child development**, childhood trauma, or disabilities. Implicit bias also plays a role. Students of color, particularly black boys, are disproportionately suspended or expelled in the early grades. Recent research from Yale University indicates that teachers hold black and brown children more accountable than their white student counterparts for the same infractions.
- Black children accounted for 19 percent of all preschool students in 2013-2014, but they made up 47 percent of those who received suspensions, according to federal civil rights data.
- Suspension harms young students. Young students who are expelled or suspended “are as much as 10 times more likely to drop out of high school, experience academic failure, be held back a grade, hold negative school attitudes, and face incarceration than those who are not.” Suspension in early grades puts children on a negative path from the very beginning of their academic careers.
- Suspension and expulsion harms children, families and our community. All students attending schools with high rates of suspension and expulsion have lower levels of connection to school and academic achievement.
- Suspensions and expulsion result in billions of dollars of lost revenue and increased social costs to taxpayers. Research estimates that every school dropout results in \$163,000 in lost tax revenue and \$364,000 in other social costs.
- Teachers and school administrators should be prepared to respond to the social and emotional needs of each student, and use effective, preventative, and restorative disciplinary procedures that provide all students with a supportive school environment.

The Solution:

- SB 5155 would prohibit suspension or expulsion of students in kindergarten through second grade, but would continue to allow teachers to remove disruptive students from the classroom. This will enable kids to stay in school and develop the skills they need to be successful.
- SB 5155 requires school districts to develop policies and procedures for supporting students with behavioral challenges, and encourages use of evidence-based approaches such as trauma-informed schools, social-emotional learning, positive behavioral supports and intervention, and restorative practices. It also supports professional development for teachers.

Please, we are urgently requesting that SB 5155 be moved out of the Senate Early Learning and K-12 committee.

The Equity in Education Coalition