



Legislative Testimony  
765 Asylum Avenue, First Floor  
Hartford, CT 06105  
860-523-9146  
[www.acluct.org](http://www.acluct.org)

**Written Testimony Opposing House Bill 7110,  
An Act Concerning Enhanced Classroom Safety and School Climate**

Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

My name is David McGuire, and I am executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in opposition to House Bill 7110, An Act Concerning Enhanced Classroom Safety and School Climate.

As an organization that fights for racial justice, works to eliminate the school-to-prison pipeline, and defends everyone's due process rights, the ACLU-CT opposes this bill, which requires boards of education to revise their safe school climate plans to include provisions relating to disruptive or injurious incidents that occur in classrooms. We believe that this bill would increase racial disparities in student discipline, lead to more students involved in the criminal justice system, and violate students' due process rights.

The ACLU-CT has concerns that this bill will disproportionately and negatively affect Connecticut students of color. Recent reports demonstrate that students of color are disciplined more often in schools and receive harsher punishments, despite the fact that much of their misconduct involves non-violent school policy violations. In 2016, statewide data from the State Department of Education found that Black and Latino boys and girls were more likely to be suspended or expelled from school, and that white students received less severe punishments when they were suspended or expelled. In fact, 58.8% percent of students who were suspended during the 2015-2016 school year were Black and Latino boys. The majority of suspensions and expulsions overall were for non-violent school policy violations. Similarly, in 2013, Connecticut Voices for Children found that 2,214 Connecticut students were arrested at school, and arrest rates were higher among minority, special education, and low-income students. Nearly one in ten students was arrested for a non-

violent violation of school policy, such as using profanity. Students of color may be more likely to experience increased instances of suspensions and expulsions should this bill pass.

The lack of required reporting on school discipline, however, would make it difficult to determine if certain groups of students were being disproportionately affected. Any changes to statutes regarding disciplinary actions in schools should include a requirement for reporting data on students who are suspended and expelled. The data should include information such as sex, race or ethnicity, English language proficiency, and disability status, to help the public and policymakers understand how discipline is working, or not working, in Connecticut schools.

The effects of this bill would pave the on-ramp to the school-to-prison pipeline with overly harsh punishments for minor school policy infractions. Students who are removed from learning environments are more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system, and this bill would most likely increase the number of students removed from their classrooms.

It is important to ensure that students' due process rights are protected in school disciplinary incidents. The ACLU-CT is concerned that this bill would create the opportunity for due process violations because the bill's provisions would not be located in our state's school discipline statutes, where students' due process protections are addressed. This could create confusion about the rights of students and the misapplication of the bill's provisions.

We strongly encourage the committee to oppose House Bill 7110.