

# An Act Enhancing Learning in the Early School Years Through a Ban on School Exclusion in Pre-Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade

**HD.532 (Rep. Decker) / SD.2039 (Sen. Gomez)**



The Young Student Exclusion Ban Act aims to improve educational outcomes by banning Massachusetts public schools from suspending or expelling students in grades pre-K through 3rd grade for non-serious disciplinary infractions. [1] The bill expands this exclusion ban to 4th grade after one year after enactment, and to 5th grade two years after enactment.

## Why is a ban on exclusionary discipline necessary?

- Exclusionary discipline rates **go up every year** as students get older.
- Excluding students from school early predicts expulsion or suspension in later grades and contributes to students' **poor academic performance and failing to graduate on time**. [3]
- The early grades are the most essential time when children need to be in the classroom, as they build their educational foundation and learn to read. For example, **three-fourths of students who are poor readers in 3rd grade will remain poor readers in high school**. [4]

## What are the alternatives?

- This bill requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary education to provide guidance and support to school districts and school staff on alternatives to suspension and expulsion such as **restorative justice and other forms of conflict resolution**.
- Alternatives like restorative practices are particularly important now, as young students return from the traumatic experience of virtual learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Has this ever been done before? YES!

- During the 2019-2020 school year, Massachusetts' largest public school district – Boston Public Schools – instituted a ban on the suspension of all students in grades kindergarten through 2nd grade and banned suspensions of 3rd through 5th grade students for non-serious offenses.
- **Nine other states and 10 municipalities have already instituted similar bans** on the use of exclusionary discipline for young students. *It's time for the state of Massachusetts to catch up!*

**Questions?** Contact Kayla Pulliam at [kayla@massappleseed.org](mailto:kayla@massappleseed.org) or Leon Smith at [leonsmith@cfjj.org](mailto:leonsmith@cfjj.org).

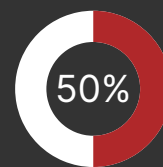
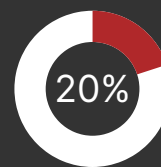
### IN MASSACHUSETTS



Black children in kindergarten through 3rd grade are over 4x more likely to experience exclusionary discipline than white students, and Latinx children are almost 3x more likely.

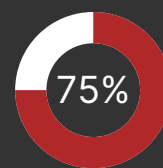
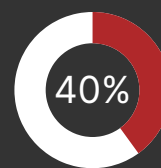


**Children with disabilities**



only account for roughly 20% of students in these early grades statewide, but comprise nearly 50% of the early-grade disciplined population.

**Economically disadvantaged children**



account for roughly 40% of MA public school students in preschool through 3rd grade, but comprise over 75% of the total population excluded from the classroom because of discipline. [2]

[1] Serious offenses include possession of a weapon, possession of drugs, assault of school faculty, or a felony charge.

[2] All data listed here is based upon the 2018-2019 school year.

[3] Dolores A. Stegelin, Institute for Child Success, "Preschool Suspension and Expulsion: Defining the Issues," (December 2018) <https://www.instituteforchildsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/ICS-2018-PreschoolSuspensionBrief-WEB.pdf>; Linda Raffaele Mendez, New Directions for Youth Development, "Predictors of suspension and negative school outcomes: A longitudinal investigation" (February 2003).

[4] Annie E. Casey Foundation, Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters (2010) <https://www.aecf.org/resources/early-warning-why-reading-by-the-end-of-third-grade-matters/>