

Esteemed members of the Senate Committee on Education and Senator Sears:

I write to respectfully ask that the committee vote on S. 194 – a bill to make school discipline a last resort, in some form before crossover. Although school association and AOE representatives were unwilling to agree to any legislative language reforming school discipline law, I was heartened with their agreement that suspension and expulsion law is something that needs fixing. Unfortunately, they believe such changes could potentially add unforeseen costs and workload for their constituents.

Nonetheless, the committee has discussed several possibilities for passing suspension/expulsion reform, and I hope the committee would vote on those possibilities this year. The ACLU of VT supports any changes in school discipline law that would prevent students from being unnecessarily exiled from their education. All of the possibilities discussed in committee would do just that.

In support of passing a school discipline reform bill out of committee, I've attached a letter from a St. Albans parent that was previously sent directly to the committee. I've also attached potential language for S. 194 regarding Findings and Intent, Academic Progress During Exclusion, and Prohibiting Zero Tolerance. These changes would place minimal burdens on schools, but would be enormously helpful to disadvantaged students.

We will continue to advocate for the changes we have suggested in whatever forum that is available. As an essential first step toward reforming school discipline law, we respectfully ask that the committee vote on S. 194 in some form and send it to the Senate floor.

I am available to offer any additional support that the committee may require. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jay

James M. Diaz, Esq.
Staff Attorney / Public Advocate
ACLU of Vermont
137 Elm St.
Montpelier, VT 05602
802-223-6304

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