

Senate Bill 419

Defiance/Disruption

Senator Nancy Skinner (SD-9)

THIS BILL

An overwhelming body of research confirms that suspending students at any age fails to improve student behavior and greatly increases the likelihood that the student will fail, be pushed out of school, and/or have contact with the juvenile justice system. SB 419 helps keep students in school, increases student success rates, and increases high school graduation rates.

THE ISSUE

Students in grades 4 through 12 may be suspended from school for minor misbehaviors, such as refusing to take off a hat, talking back, or falling asleep in class. These needless suspensions are referred to as “defiance/disruption” and often occur without considering the root cause of a student’s actions.

Defiance/disruption suspensions contribute to racial inequality in our schools. Research and data confirm that Black students, other students of color, students with disabilities, and LGBTQ students are disproportionately suspended for low-level subjective offenses, such as defiance/disruption. Suspensions also cause California students to lose significant instruction time. A recent study revealed that students lost over 150,000 days of school due to defiance/disruption suspensions in 2016-17.

In 2014, AB 420 eliminated defiance/disruption as a grounds for suspending students in grades K-3 and as a grounds for expulsion for all students. Since AB 420 became law, suspensions of Black students for defiance/disruption has dropped by 70%. Between 2013-2015 more than 15,000 K-3 suspensions were prevented, and many school districts are more likely to adopt alternatives to suspensions and expulsions and to keep students in schools. Many school districts, such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Azusa,

Oakland, Pasadena, and Washington Unified School Districts have already eliminated defiance/disruption as grounds for suspension for all grade levels.

New funding has assisted schools in adopting alternatives. For instance, California set aside \$15 million in funds in 2018-2019 to help address the root causes of discipline for students and to foster a positive and healthy school climate.

SOLUTION

SB 419 will improve student outcomes and encourage schools to adopt alternatives to suspensions by:

- Eliminating defiance/disruption suspensions for students in grades 4-8;
- Eliminating defiance/disruption suspensions for students in grades 9-12 until January 1, 2025;

CO-SPONSORS

- Alliance for Boys and Men of Color
- Brothers Sons Selves Coalition
- Children Now
- Fix School Discipline Coalition
- Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights
- Mid-City Community Advocacy Network
- PolicyLink
- Public Counsel
- Youth Justice Coalition

SUPPORTERS

- ACLU of California
- Association of California School Administrators
- American Academy of Pediatrics, California
- Bay Area Legal Aid
- Black Parallel School Board
- California Public Defenders Association
- California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.
- California School Based Health Alliance
- California State PTA
- Children’s Defense Fund – California

SUPPORTERS CONTINUED

- Community Asset Development Redefining Education (CADRE)
- Compton Unified School District
- Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement (COPE)
- Dolores Huerta Foundation
- East Bay Community Law Center
- Empowering Pacific Islander Communities
- Equal Justice Society
- Fathers and Families of San Joaquin
- Fight Crime: Invest in Kids
- Inner City Struggle
- Los Angeles Unified School District
- National Center for Youth Law
- Resilience Orange County
- Restorative Schools Vision Project
- Shani Buggs (as an individual)
- Southeast Asian Resource Action Center
- The Education Trust – West
- The Mentoring Center
- Tides Advocacy
- Youth Alive!
- Youth Forward
- Youth Law Center

