

SUPPORT: SB133 Fair Discipline in Public Schools

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Fact Sheet

Over the last ten years, nearly 100,000 students across the state have been referred to law enforcement by their schools. The majority of these referrals have been for minor offenses that reflect normal adolescent behavior and do not threaten school safety. Not long ago, the same behavior that resulted in a trip to the principal's office or a call home now results in an arrest and/or a trip to juvenile court.

The school discipline crisis in Colorado prevents thousands of students from getting the high-quality education they deserve.

Last year, there were **over 63,000 out-of-school suspensions** and **2,238 expulsions** across the state.

"Zero-tolerance" policies and practices emphasize the long-term removal of students who violate school rules.

These practices can undermine good students' educational opportunities and put them at a greater risk for involvement with the juvenile or criminal justice systems.

Sometimes, these practices do not promote school safety or academic success.

Colorado needs to stop getting "tough" and instead get smart about school discipline, by reducing the use of suspensions, expulsions, school-based arrests, and police tickets in order to build a more supportive learning environment in which all students have the chance to stay in school, learn from their mistakes, and fulfill their potential.

What the bill does: SB 133 asks the Colorado Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice (CCJJ) to use a working group to research these problems and offer solutions. The working group would:

Address the overuse of suspensions and expulsions, the overuse of school-based arrests and tickets, and racial disparities in both of these areas of school discipline.

Involve youth and community leaders who have direct experience with these issues

Be composed of stakeholders from schools and organizations around the state.

Collect data and research, and report on the problem.

Offer recommendations and propose legislative changes, if needed, before the next legislative session.

Why Support: We can reduce Colorado's dropout rate, increase the high school graduation rate, close achievement and opportunity gaps, have safer and more effective schools, limit the number of youth entering the juvenile and criminal justice systems, use our law enforcement agencies more efficiently, save taxpayer dollars, and build healthier communities throughout the state - all by taking a smarter approach toward school discipline.



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