



## **Use Effective Discipline, Not Zero Tolerance**

**Testimony of IDRA presented for the House Education Committee against SB 2432 allowing mandatory removal of a public school student from the classroom following certain conduct – Morgan Craven, J.D., National Director of Policy, April 30, 2019**

Our concern with Senate Bill 2432 is that it unnecessarily widens the path to disciplinary alternative education programs (DAEPs).

First, there are other ways to address harassing behavior, including through the “behavior threat assessment teams” that are created through other school safety legislation. We should be seeking to limit the number of students sent to DAEPs, which TEA has identified as a risk factor for dropping out and which often do not provide enriching academic experiences or important social interactions.

Instead, we should be engaging the research-based approaches, like threat assessment systems, that we know work to address the root causes of the behavior, find real solutions, and provide appropriate and proportional consequences.

Another concern is that vague offenses, like harassment, can sometimes be used to punish the behaviors of certain students more than others. There is plenty of research about the ways that the behaviors of Black and Latino students, for example, are viewed as compared to their peers. Even for the *exact same behaviors*, students of color, students with disabilities and LGBTQ students are more likely to be punished – and punished more harshly – than their peers. Students of color are more likely to be viewed as older, more culpable, and more in need of a punitive approach than their peers, again even for the exact same behaviors.

The actions of students with disabilities are often viewed differently than those of their peers, and we know that these students are punished at disproportionately high rates, including referrals to DAEP programs.

So, when we propose a mandatory punishment for an offense that is, by its nature, extremely subjective and open to a lot of interpretation, we are potentially impacting different groups of students very, very differently.

I’ll end by just reiterating that we are concerned with an expansion of the pathway to DAEPs. We know they compromise students’ academic success and futures and often do not address underlying issues, if they exist, the way other research-based approaches do.

*The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent, non-profit organization led by Celina Moreno, J.D. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by providing dynamic training; useful research, evaluation, and frameworks for action; timely policy analyses; and innovative materials and programs.*