

House Education
 03/02/2023 01:30 PM
 HB23-1109 School Policies & Student Conduct
 Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Anthony Roybal For himself	<p>When I was expelled from school I felt like they took the wrong route about this. I believe they should have set up a plan where I would have no contact with the other party in the situation. I also think they went too far with the expulsion when they did not in fact know if I was guilty or not. I was so excited to begin highschool for many reasons. Some of those reasons were to attend school with my friends and meet new people as well as learn new things. I wanted to go above and beyond in school. I wanted to graduate on time but now I have fallen behind to even be able to graduate with my friends. Another thing that happened to me after I was expelled from school was that I fell into a depression because of how I wasn't able to have the highschool experience with my friends. Not only did this affect myself but it also had an impact on my family. One responsibility that comes to being the middle child is being the role model for my little brother Elijah. He looks up to me. When I was expelled and couldn't go to school, Elijah didn't want to go to school either. His motivation every morning to go to school was watching me go to school and get my work done. Another person this affected was my nana Lorraine. This had a huge impact on her health. She was worried about me and how far behind I was getting in school. My nana and my dad began to miss work just to take care of me and to motivate Elijah into going to school. This wore my nana out mentally and physically. My dad was also affected by this. As I said before, he was missing work to take care of me and he was making sure I did not miss any court dates. As this was dragging his health down he had to take care of my mental state. He was by my side through everything. Overall this had a huge impact on my whole family. - Anthony</p>
Jose Lera For AUL Denver	<p>My name is Joey and I am a student at AUL Denver. I was born and raised in Denver, and today I am testifying to ask that you vote in favor of HB 23-1109.</p> <p>In my life, I have experienced a lot of loss. Because of that loss, I feel angry and often my behavior reflects that. Many people have written me off as someone who is just going to mess up and not finish school, not graduate and end up in jail. This makes me feel irritated, because deep down inside, if you get to know me, I'm a cool person. I'm good to talk to, I'm good to get along with. I'm respectful and responsible, and I have goals. I want to graduate - I'm only a year away.</p> <p>I have made mistakes in the community before, but that is not who I am. At AUL, I have gotten support, people by my side, people who show up for me. It makes me feel good that I have people at school who can help me get through tough times, and I don't think any other high school</p>

	<p>would do that for me. But they should. All schools should take kids like me. I deserve to be happy and not judged. I deserve to be free.</p> <p>Schools should show up for kids, show up for court. They should be there for kids to offer support, and they should talk to them. Schools should get the things kids need - get a hold of supports like therapists and gang reduction.</p> <p>I am succeeding today because I was given a second chance, and all kids should be. Please vote in support of HB23-1109.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
<p>Jevon Robinson For AUL Denver</p>	<p>My name is Jevon and I am here to testify in favor of HB 23-1109.</p> <p>As a young man, I feel that it is not fair for a student to be punished harshly just because they messed up once. This does not mean that they are going to continue to mess up. School is important in so many ways and graduation is a big step in finding a good job and getting more opportunities. Unfortunately black and brown youth, way too often, have these opportunities for stability taken from them. Harsh punishments are not helping these kids grow.</p> <p>I grew up in rough conditions, and still do, but now, it feels a bit harder. At my age, I understand the world and how it works. I feel many more responsibilities and I know my mom worries as I get older and try to avoid situations that may harm me. In this society, this sometimes feels impossible.</p> <p>I want to be an entrepreneur and push into industries where black men were never wanted or included. I want to leave Colorado and live somewhere new. You may ask what I want to see and experience. I don't know yet, as right now I only understand life in Denver. I can't wait to get out there and see what I'm missing.</p> <p>I believe that all children should have the right and freedom to explore. And for this reason, I ask that you please vote in favor of HB 23-1109.</p>
<p>Malachi Vigil For AUL Denver</p>	<p>My name is Malachi and I am a student at AUL Denver. I am also a Denver Native, born and raised. I am testifying today to ask that you vote in favor of HB 23-1109.</p> <p>I am 18 years old and started coming to AUL when I was 14 yo. Before, I wasn't showing up to school a lot and I eventually got dropped. However, I came back when I was 17 in the middle of the year.</p>

	<p>Even though in the past I was labeled as a bad kid because I would smoke and get suspended.</p> <p>Other schools i've been to have security guards and check you everyday. I was always searched in Middle school, even if I didn't have anything.</p> <p>When I was suspended from school, I didn't learn anything because I was just doing the same things everyday. I never got to speak up for myself. It was always about how the teachers felt or what they thought. I could only tell my mom about things. They would send me home with a letter saying I was suspended, but I never got to defend myself. It's always their word against yours especially because you're a kid. By not being in school, I probably got in more trouble.</p> <p>Not being in school made me feel mad because I wanted to learn and be with friends. I would get stuck in my head and then I'd be even more upset when I did get back to school.</p> <p>I agree with this bill because if you get in trouble for something small you shouldn't get expelled or judged.</p> <p>I've gotten in trouble at school and got two tickets, but I never had a criminal charge or been expelled, but I do remember some friends who have been.</p> <p>I came to AUL not because I got kicked out, but because my friends are here and they really enjoy it. This school listens to me and are more understanding. I don't feel judged here. They help me alot with my family, give us gas cards for our families cards, help us stay focused in class, and help us catch up.</p> <p>Please stop letting the small things be why kids get kicked out of school. Please give us a chance to be heard.</p> <p>I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify and again, I urge you to vote in favor of HB 23-1109.</p>
--	---

My name is Ja'tayvion (last name) and I am a student at AUL Denver. I am also a Denver Native, born and raised. I am testifying today to ask that you vote in favor of HB 23-1109.

I am 16 years old, and this is my first year at AUL. I'm at AUL because I was expelled from westminster. So I had no other choices and AUL was a good choice.

I remember being called to the office, being asked about a bathroom key I didn't have and then they searched me even though I didn't have the key. Based on what they found, they said I was kicked out, **but I never got a ticket or had a court case based on that.**

They sent my dad an email, and said I wasn't allowed to go to any westminster public schools and then four or five months later I enrolled into AUL. **I missed about 3-4 months of school because of this.**

Again, I was never charged for anything. I never got to speak up or defend myself to stay in school.

It affected me because I missed some credits in the school year, and at the time I was missing school I didn't have anything to do and was missing out on a lot of things. It affected my family because they had to find someone to watch me so I couldn't be home alone. My family was going through some things at the time too, so it was hard for my dad to work. I felt frustrated and stuck in my head because I was thinking about a lot of things and what I could do better at my next school. It was frustrating to not be able to defend myself or speak about that incident instead of going straight to expulsion.

Before AUL, school wasn't really good because I didn't get as much help from my teachers as they help at AUL. I'm a hands on learner, so if you show me an example, I'll be alright, but people wouldn't do that for me. Here, they do, and the learning experience has been much better. It was hard for me to trust people and connect with people at my old school, and kept to myself. At my last school I would get called the N word and and make jokes. But i wouldn't do anything about because i would get expelled and I already felt like I was on other people's radar.

But now, i get along with more people.

I like AUL because they help us with whatever we need, if we need breaks or are angry, they help us. The teachers and everyone in the building is joyful and try to make eachother's day. They help us. They support us in a lot of things. **I feel accepted at AUL.**

I think the expulsion experience I had could've been different if they hadn't assumed I had something that I didn't. If they'd given me an opportunity to talk, I think it would've made a difference. I wish we could have had a family meeting or something instead of immediately being expelled.

I want you all to know that it's not right to go straight to expulsion no matter who you are, and to figure out better solutions, and to not judge people before knowing who they are. Don't judge people off the little mistakes that they make or the little things they do. Actually get to know people for who they are.

School is very important because some jobs need a high school diploma. Not a lot of people's families graduate, so it would be good to be able to be that person in your family. I want to be able to learn the good and new things school has to offer, and I want the same thing for kids like me.

I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify and again, I urge you to vote in favor of HB 23-1109.

**Written Testimony Supporting HB23-1109 to the
CO House Education Committee
March 1, 2023**



Chair McLachlan, Vice-Chair Martinez, and House Education Committee Members, thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony supporting HB23-1109.

I am Rev. Amy Petré-Hill, representing my Aurora-based interfaith, behavioral health, and disability ministry, Mental Health & Inclusion Ministries. For over ten years, I have served people and families of all faiths living with disabilities. I have worked as a pastor at three Front Range churches as the Spiritual Care Fellow at UC Medical School's JFK Partners, the state's University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service. Today, I serve over 100 families a year through a partnership with Developmental Pathways, an Aurora area Community Center Board. I also serve on JFK Partner's Advisory Board and Colorado's Protection and Advocacy System for Individuals with Mental Illness Advisory Council. In addition, I use my experience as a former special education attorney to volunteer with Colorado Cross Disability Coalition's individual advocacy team.

Every *month*, I encounter families—particularly families from BIPOC communities—struggling to prevent their child with a disability from suspension or expulsion from a public school. The research is clear: students expelled or suspended from school are as much as ten times more likely to drop out of high school, experience academic failure and grade retention, hold negative school attitudes, and face incarceration than those who are not.¹ Further, we know that Colorado is in the midst of a youth mental health crisis², and removing access to vital behavioral health services in school further slashes supports for students who need it the most.

Parents of children in Colorado with behavior issues—many resulting from unaddressed mental health conditions—are forced to represent their children in suspension or expulsion hearings with one arm tied behind their backs. Unless they have the funds to hire an attorney or easy access to an education advocate, they do not have access to all the information they need to explain their child's situation or behavior thoroughly or thoughtfully. In addition, they may not have all the information they need to get their child help from medical and mental health professionals is required! HB23-1109 ensures that a school district must “provide all records that the school district intends to use as supporting evidence in a hearing to the student or the student's parent, guardian, or legal custodian at least five business days prior to the hearing.” This empowers parents to fully understand a school district's evidence against their child, seek assistance

¹ Meek, S. E., and W. S. Gilliam. 2016. “Expulsion and Suspension in Early Education as Matters of Social Justice and Health Equity.” *NAM Perspectives*. Discussion Paper, National Academy of Medicine, Washington, DC. <https://doi.org/10.31478/201610e>

² “One Year Later: Mental Health Crisis Worsens.” 2022. Children's Hospital Colorado. <https://www.childrenscolorado.org/about/news/2022/may-2022/mental-health-er-visits-up/>.

and resources, and advocate for the best solution for a young person with the school district. HB23-1109 also ensures due process by allowing the cross-examination of district personnel and setting the school district's burden as showing clear and convincing evidence that the child must be removed from the learning environment, particularly for conduct beyond school grounds that does not threaten risk of physical harm to other students and school personnel.

This bill also addresses the ongoing disproportionate suspension and expulsion of children with disabilities by allowing parents and their supporters to challenge discrimination that, nationwide, results in almost 1 out of 11 students with disabilities (9%) being suspended, compared to 4% for students without disabilities. Black students with disabilities consistently have the highest risk of suspension: almost 1 in 5 (19%) receiving a suspension.³

Today, you can ensure all Colorado's parents, particularly the many Colorado children from BIPOC communities and those with disabilities, due process in suspension and expulsion hearings and help reduce the "school to prison pipeline" from suspensions and expulsions of the most vulnerable students. Vote "yes" on HB23-1109.

³ Leung-Gagné, M., McCombs, J., Scott, C., & Losen, D. J. 2022. "Pushed out: Trends and disparities in out-of-school suspension." *Learning Policy Institute*. <https://doi.org/10.54300/235.277>.

My name is David (last name) and I am a student at AUL Denver. I am also a Denver Native, born and raised. I am testifying today to ask that you vote in favor of HB 23-1109.

I am a Junior at AUL Denver

People may have judged me for my past, now I like AUL because the teachers are nice and I am not judged.

I started to go to AUL because I was failing and no longer able to attend North.

I was threatened to be expelled or suspended from North in the past, but can't completely remember. But, people shouldn't be expelling or suspending kids just because of allegations.

This bill matters to me because everyone should be treated the same in school no matter what. I feel like it's important because schools shouldn't be able to suspend or expel kids because of what's happening outside school. Everyone should be treated the same inside the building no matter what.

I do know some people who have been suspended or expelled just because they're being accused of something.

I was no longer able to see them because they got kicked out. They are my friends.

People assume we are up to no good. Teachers have assumed a lot that my friends and I are doing bad and we aren't. It's annoying and feels unfair. **It's feels like I'm losing and kind of like I'm not given a real chance.**

I can't go to a lot of schools and a lot of schools won't accept me even though they don't know me, but AUL knows me. And it's my favorite school.

The environment is positive and they are helping me get to where I need to be. I'm accepted here. AUL is unique and I wish other schools were like it where we aren't judged, and where I can just be a regular student.

My goal in life is to go back to Trade school and get my Class A CDL so I can go across the country. I want to be able to own my own business.

I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify and again, I urge you to vote in favor of HB 23-1109.

My name is Precious and I am a student at AUL Denver. I am also a Denver Native, born and raised. I am testifying today to ask that you vote in favor of HB 23-1109. I am 18 years old and in 10th grade. This is my second year at AUL. I live in Denver in the Highlands area right by AUL.

I think that it's important to support the bill because I feel like not all kids are "bad" or how people label them. I feel like everyone deserves a chance and everyone deserves equal rights. Kids have to have that opportunity to explain themselves. I'm in support of the racial equality this bill would help with, because we are all the same and we are all just people and shouldn't be treated differently.

I feel like a lot of people are left out because of their skin color or profiled because of their skin color, but deep down what matters is their personality. People mess up in life sometimes but deserve a second chance. If they want to try again with school, they should have that chance to. If someone gets out of jail, they should have an actual opportunity to do better and try for their family.

I enrolled at AUL because I personally am not supported in public schools. AUL is smaller, the teachers go above and beyond, I get support, and I get my work done better here. I was labeled as "bad" for talking too much in class and speaking up for myself, sometimes an attitude. I may have been disrespectful, but now that's different. You get what you give. I have a hard time focusing in school with a lot of distractions, but here I have what I need. Once I hit high school I started to mature too. Now I'm focused on graduating and moving on with my future. So I'm not here because I got expelled or suspended, but I'm here because I really like AUL and how it treats all of us. I think I remember being suspended in middle school but that's it. But, this is still important to me because personally for me, being in school has kept me out of trouble. School keeps you out of trouble and it's a good source for people to keep their minds off of all the stuff in the outside world.

School is important. Everyone needs these resources and lessons. You learn things from school that help you in the real world. It's life changing to have the right to school. I like coming to school to see my teachers and friends. I've never had drama after middle school. Ever since AUL I haven't had those situations. I think it's important that you consider that other people deserve that right to testify that they aren't guilty or prove themselves instead of being judged right away. Everyone needs to be treated with the same rights and stop targeting Black, Hispanics, and Native Americans. The process needs to be more fair. I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify and again, I urge you to vote in favor of HB 23-1109.