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BILL: Senate Bill 766
TITLE: Public Schools – Student Discipline – Restorative Approaches
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POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
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Senate Bill 766 requires a school principal to implement restorative approaches, rehabilitative, special education, or other supportive service interventions before suspending or expelling a student; authorizing a principal to suspend or expel a student before implementing certain procedures under certain circumstances; requiring each county board of education to develop a multiyear plan for the adoption, implementation, and continued monitoring of restorative approaches to student discipline; providing for the contents of a certain plan; etc.

PSSAM **opposes** Senate Bill 766.

As local superintendents, we fully recognize the importance of fostering positive, healthy school climates and helping students learn from their mistakes. We also understand the rationale behind moving away from zero-tolerance discipline policies toward proven restorative approaches to addressing conflict in schools.

PSSAM appreciates the intent of this legislation. However, Senate Bill 766 would be a large financial burden on school systems to implement. In order to effectively implement effective restorative approaches, every school principal and key staff in every public school would need to receive extensive, in-depth training on implementation practices, strategies and policies. PSSAM has taken the firm position to oppose all proposed legislation that would result in a fiscal impact to local school systems.

PSSAM believes that House Bill 1229 Restorative Schools Fund and Grants – Establishment offers a more realistic and financially sound alternative to this issue. The purpose of the Fund “is to provide grants to local school systems and individual schools for training on and implementation and evaluation of restorative approaches that build and sustain positive learning communities.”

For the reasons stated above, PSSAM **opposes** Senate Bill 766 and requests an unfavorable committee report.