

# BLACK MALE ACHIEVEMENT

## PORTLAND

Every Black male will have sufficient access and opportunity to the factors that lead to health, safety, and success.

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March 9, 2015

Senate Education Committee  
Senator Arnie Roblan, Chair  
900 Court St. NE, Hearing Room C  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Senate Bill 553

Dear Senator Roblan and Members of the Committee:

Black Male Achievement Portland is concerned about the disparity in discipline, specifically suspension and expulsion, in Oregon's school systems. To say that there is a crisis in the educational outcomes for our youth of color, and specifically our Black youth, is in no way hyperbole. This is our next generation of leaders and the data are clear. Children of color are disproportionately disciplined, suspended and expelled, with Black boys the most impacted by exclusionary discipline.

Black Male Achievement Portland (BMA) is a collaborative under the auspices of the National League of Cities, led by a Steering Committee of Black men who represent over 20 organizations, non-profit, for profit, or governmental agencies. It focuses on the removal of barriers to accessing high quality and equitable employment, education, public safety, and livable communities on behalf of Black men and boys. BMA acts as a convener, facilitator, policy guide, and collective voice to obtain data, push for policy change, increase program scale, and exert influence to create awareness and change to improve outcomes for Black men and boys.

The idea of exclusionary discipline beginning as early as kindergarten goes against the fact that early instruction is critical to creating the love for learning that we hope to instill in our children, and the opportunities for success that the system is obligated to provide. In Oregon, Black youth are three times more likely than their white counterparts to be suspended or expelled. If, as we know, third grade reading ability is critical to continued success, such exclusionary discipline serves to undermine our efforts achieve that success. Further, research shows that exclusionary discipline significantly increases the likelihood that a



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student will become engaged in the juvenile justice system. We know that the “school to prison pipeline” is all too real. If exclusionary discipline can be attributed to the beginning of that pipeline, we have an obligation to use it sparingly, and with significant oversight.

For these reasons, BMA Portland supports any effort to minimize exclusionary discipline and asks this committee to thoughtfully consider and support Senate Bill 553.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the BMA through Dante J. James at [dante.james@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:dante.james@portlandoregon.gov), or at 503-823-4433.