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Madison Metropolitan School District Board of Directors
c/o Ed Hughes, President
545 W Dayton St
Madison WI 53703-1967
Via board@madison.k12.wi.us

Dear MMSD Board,

The ACLU of Wisconsin is happy to hear you are considering a new Student Behavior Plan which would clearly state that students cannot be suspended/expelled for certain smaller-level behavioral issues and eliminate zero tolerance policies.

The school-to-prison pipeline is one of the most important civil rights challenges facing our nation today. The school-to-prison pipeline refers to the national trend of criminalizing, rather than educating, our nation's children. The pipeline encompasses the growing use of zero-tolerance discipline, school-based arrests, disciplinary alternative schools, and secured detention to marginalize our most at-risk youth and deny them access to education. Zero-tolerance disciplinary policies are often the first step in a child's journey through the pipeline by imposing severe discipline on students without regard to individual circumstances.

Getting rid of these policies may help you comply with the new U.S. Department of Education Federal Guidelines that discuss exclusionary discipline practices which disproportionately impact students of color.ⁱ

The American Bar Association has condemned zero-tolerance policies as inherently unjust: "zero tolerance has become a one-size-fits-all solution to all the problems that schools confront. It has redefined students as criminals, with unfortunate consequences... Unfortunately, most current [zero-tolerance] policies eliminate the common sense that comes with discretion and, at great cost to society and to children and families, do little to improve school safety."ⁱⁱ

We strongly encourage you to rid the district of zero-tolerance policies. Thank you for doing the right thing for the students in Madison.

Sincerely,

Chris Ahmuty
Executive Director

ⁱ <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/guiding-principles.pdf>

ⁱⁱ ABA Juvenile Justice Committee, ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY: REPORT (Feb. 2001)