

Senate State, Veterans, & Military Affairs
 05/03/2023 Upon Adjournment
 HB23-1291 Procedures For Expulsion Hearing Officers
 Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Katie Hecker For Office of the Child's Representative	<p>May 3, 2023</p> <p>To Members of the Senate State, Veterans, & Military Affairs Committee,</p> <p>My name is Katie Hecker, and I am the Youth Justice Attorney at Colorado's Office of the Child's Representative. I am writing on behalf of my organization in support of HB23-1291.</p> <p>OCR's contract attorneys frequently represent children and youth in truancy, delinquency, and dependency & neglect cases who are also subject to school disciplinary proceedings. In fact, foster children are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled from their school; needless to say, this issue is one that strikes at the heart of OCR's work. The burdens of school discipline do not fall equally on all of Colorado's children, and we appreciate the General Assembly's willingness to address injustice in this area.</p> <p>OCR's view is that all children deserve to attend school and that in only the rarest of circumstances, and after full and fair hearings, should a child be excluded from their school. The growth, well-being, and development of the children of Colorado hinges on their ability to access education. OCR appreciates the bill's provisions that protect the due process rights of children who are being excluded from school. Notably, the bill addresses conflicts of interest and training among hearing officers, requires the provision of reports that the school will rely on to the child and their family, requires training of hearing officers, and clarifies appeal processes for children and their families. These changes are important first steps in this difficult and essential work of improving fairness in school discipline proceedings.</p> <p>OCR believes there is more work to be done to ensure the equity of the school discipline process and looks forward to any future opportunities to improve the landscape of this important issue in evidence-based, data-driven, and equitable ways.</p> <p>Thank you again for your attention to this issue, and for the opportunity to provide written testimony.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Katie Hecker</p>

