

Educator Barnes Speaks to the Indiana Senate about School Discipline

By [Shawnta S. Barnes](#) – March 6, 2018



If you were born in the 80s like I was, you probably have watched Schoolhouse Rock. One popular episode is, “I’m just a Bill.”

I’m just a bill.

Yes, I’m only a bill.

And I’m sitting here on Capitol Hill.

Well, it’s a long, long journey

To the capital city.

It's a long, long wait

While I'm sitting in committee,

But I know I'll be a law someday

At least I hope and pray that I will,

But today I am still just a bill.

Although this episode focuses on bills becoming laws at the federal level, the process is the same at the local level and I believe we should all be involved in policy at the local level. Over the last few weeks, while the Indiana General Assembly has been in session, I have been able to watch this process play out with House Bill 1421 School Discipline. This bill aims to reduce the number of times students are out of the classroom due to exclusionary practices and it addresses the disproportionate number of minority students who are disciplined and excluded from class versus their white counterparts. It requires schools to have a plan beginning with the 2019-2020 school year to train teachers and provide professional development to help school staff to handle discipline appropriately.

Last month, I wrote about how I went to the Indiana Statehouse to testify in favor of the bill to the House Education Committee. Unfortunately, after waiting for over three hours, testimony for the bill was moved to the following day and I could not return to speak. Luckily, it passed out of the House Education Committee and made it through the next hurdle of passing the full House.

Then, the bill moved to the Senate, I returned again to share my testimony. After waiting for four hours, I was finally able to share my personal experiences as shown in the video above. With amendments added to address bullying and cyberbullying, the bill passed out of the Senate Education and Career Development committee with a unanimous 11 to 0

vote. Now, I'm waiting for the full Senate to vote on the bill. I hope the journey for HB 1421 ends the same way as the "I'm Just a Bill" episode.

Congressman: He signed you, Bill! Now you're a law!

Bill: Oh yes!!!

To support this bill, you can call the main phone number for the Senate 317-232-9400. Ask to be connected to your Senator's legislative aide to voice your support.