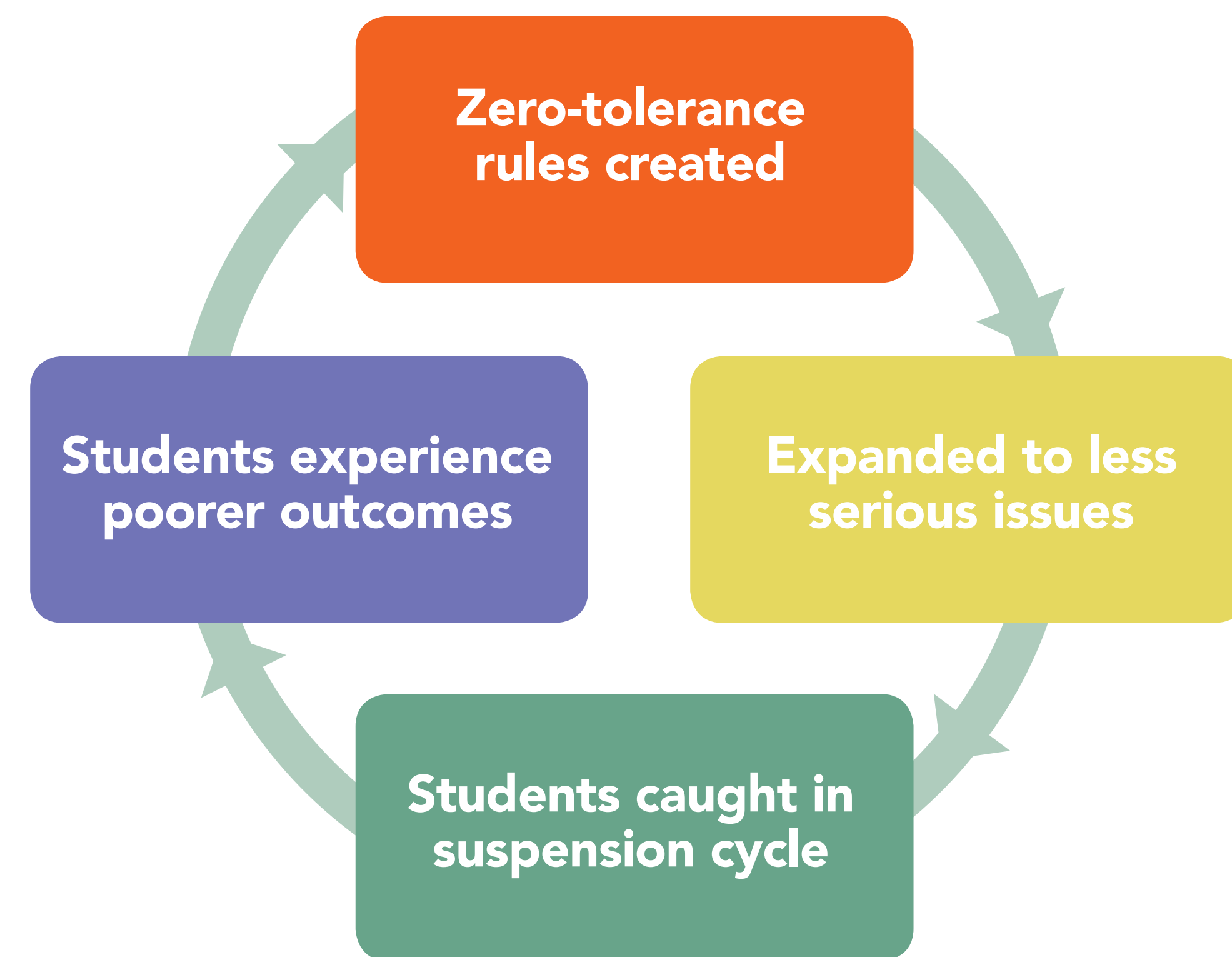


# Ending Early Elementary Suspensions in Maryland Schools

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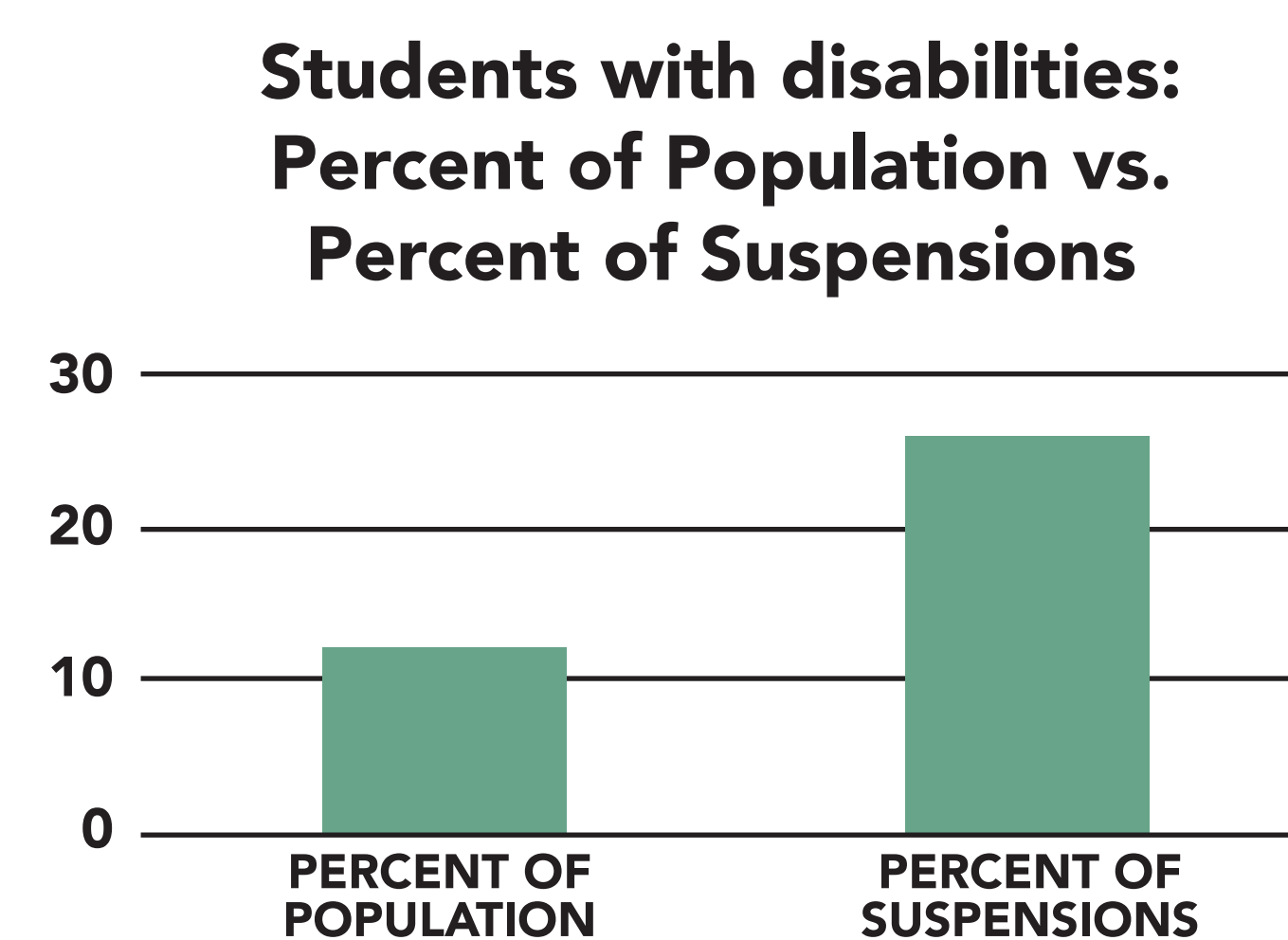
## Problem

- Zero-tolerance policies were originally created to deal with drug and weapons violations in schools.
- Out-of-school suspension and expulsion were saved as a consequence for the most serious issues.
- Policies expanded, and students were suspended for less serious issues.
- Research shows that suspending students has detrimental effects on both educational and life outcomes for students:
  - Lower academic performance, higher rates of dropout, failure to graduate, increased academic disengagement, and subsequent disciplinary exclusions.
  - There is no evidence that suspension practices make schools safer.
  - Compounded negative effect when students are suspended in the early years.
  - Difficult to exit the suspension cycle.
  - School records follow students, making it easier to pre-judge students.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education (December 2014): "Disturbing trends in suspension practices warrant immediate attention from the early childhood education fields to prevent, severely limit, and work toward eventually eliminating the expulsion and suspension – and ensure the safety and well-being – of young children..."



## Findings

- In 2014-2015, Maryland schools out-of-school suspended, or expelled, 2,926 of its youngest students—kindergarten to grade three.
- This was 11.5 percent of the total number of students suspended or expelled across all school grades.
- In this same school year, students with disabilities equaled about 12 percent of the total population; however, they accounted for approximately 26 percent of the suspensions.
- In 2014, Maryland schools ended the use of zero-tolerance discipline policies.
- However, this policy does not address the age/grade of the students being suspended.

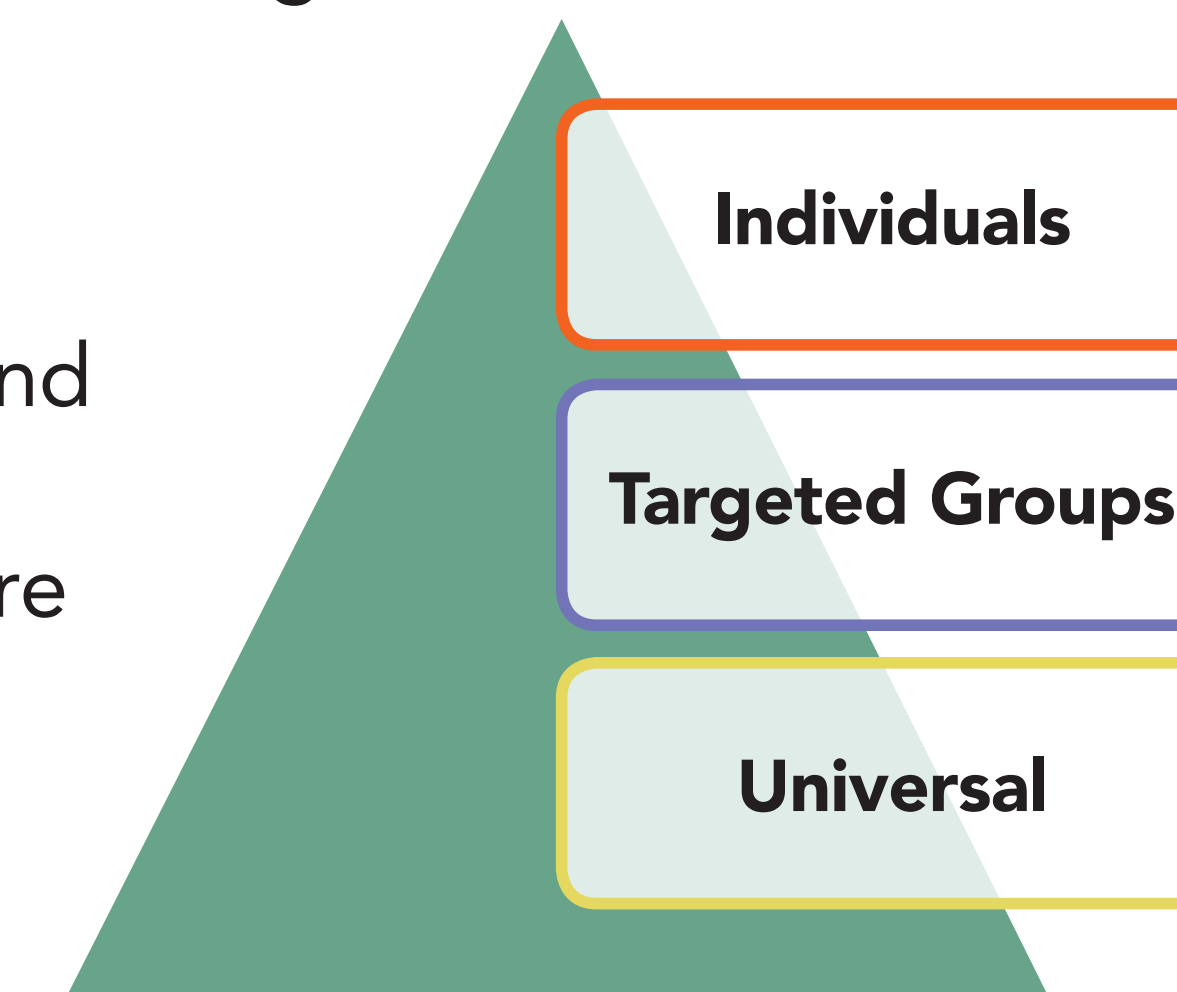


## Proposal

- Legislation prohibiting suspension for students in grades pre-kindergarten through second grade, while providing for increased levels of behavioral and social support and intervention at these grade levels.
- A model of success is currently in place at White Oak School, a public separate day school located in Baltimore County, Maryland. This school serves students with disabilities who have academic and social-emotional-behavioral needs. White Oak utilizes a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) model, creates student-specific incentives, and implements a program called Alternative Behavior Learning Environment (ABLE).
- When students commit infractions that would typically warrant an out-of-school suspension or expulsion, they instead go to ABLE.
- ABLE is a classroom where the student receives one-on-one instruction in reading and math, and has an individual session with their assigned counselor, and the student's parents are informed that their child is in the program.
- Using this program, White Oak School has not suspended a student in four years.

## What Schools Need

- Professional development for educators on classroom strategies that deal with behavioral challenges.
- High-quality, school-wide PBIS models, which use evidence-based interventions at all three tiers:
  - First tier: behavioral expectations are established and taught to all students;
  - Second tier: students needing additional support are offered group level interventions; and
  - Third tier: students needing significant support for behavioral challenges are provided individualized, evidence-based interventions.
- Training and support for implementing the principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA).
- A review of restorative justice practices looks promising, so implementing these practices may be valuable.
- For students with the most significant challenging behavior, schools need to work on strengthening their collaboration with parents and mental health providers, which ideally would be school-based services.

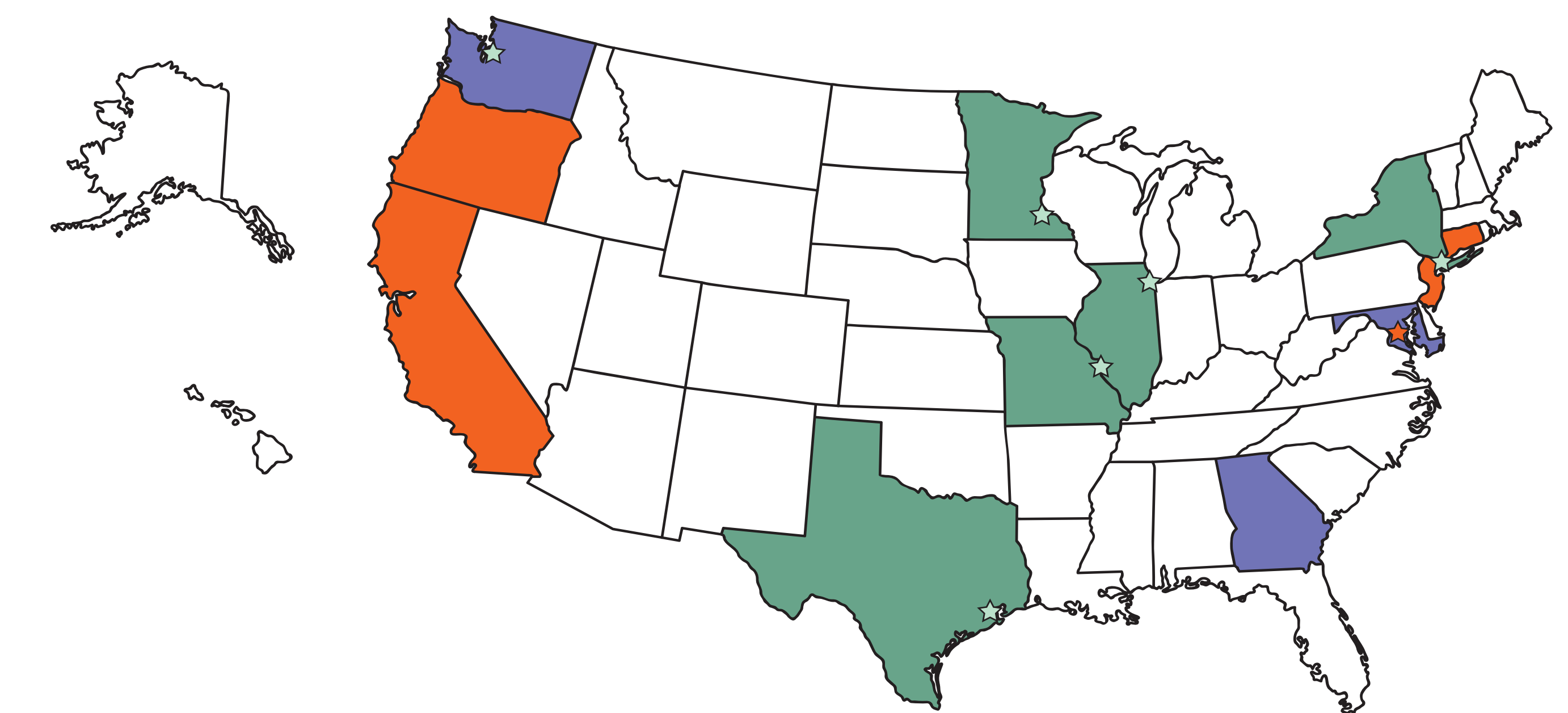


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## The following states have recently set precedents by enacting legislation to end early elementary suspension:

- **Effective January 2015** California enacted law AB 420, which eliminates in-school and out-of-school suspensions for disruptive behavior for students in kindergarten through third grade.
- **Effective July 2015** Connecticut passed SB 1053, which banned school suspensions for students in pre-kindergarten through second grade.
- **Effective July 2015** Oregon limited the circumstances when students in grades kindergarten through five can receive an out-of-school suspension, or expulsion, to incidents when a student causes serious physical injury to another student or staff member, when the student's behavior poses a direct threat to health or safety, or when required by federal law.
- **Effective September 2016** New Jersey prohibits all suspension and expulsion of pre-kindergarten students and all out-of-school suspensions for students in kindergarten through second grade.



- States with legislation regarding suspension or expulsion
- States with pending legislation
- States with local education agencies (school districts) that have policies regarding suspension and expulsion practices
- ☆ St. Louis, MO, Houston, TX, New York, NY, Minneapolis, MN, Chicago, IL, Seattle, WA



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