



Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair  
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Bill: Senate Bill 367: State Department of Education – Guidelines on Trauma-Informed Approach**

**Position: Support**

Dear Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

We are writing on behalf of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA), a professional organization representing about 500 school psychologist across the state. We advocate for the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic wellbeing of students and families across Maryland.

Nearly 35 million children have experienced at least one event that could lead to childhood trauma<sup>1</sup>. The National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence conducted in 2011 indicated that 41.2% of children had been victims of physical assault within the last year. During the same time period, 5.6% of children and adolescents were sexually abused, with rates as high as 22.8% among adolescent females.

Childhood trauma has both immediate and long-term effects on individuals. Traumatic exposure has been associated with secondary conditions including post-traumatic stress disorder, separation anxiety, social anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and oppositional and aggressive behavior<sup>2</sup>. Trauma also has a negative impact on academic functioning as it is predictive of poorer reading, math, and science achievement scores among elementary students<sup>3</sup>. Schools can, however, play a crucial role in decreasing the negative academic, behavioral, and psychological impact of a traumatic event on a child by adopting a trauma-informed approach. A trauma-informed approach is a way of providing services to children and families that facilitates the improved functioning of those negatively affected by trauma<sup>4</sup>.

MSPA is in strong support of Senate Bill 367 – Guidelines on Trauma-Informed Approach, and we respectfully urge a favorable vote. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please feel free to contact us at [legislative@mspaonline.org](mailto:legislative@mspaonline.org).

Respectfully submitted,

Kyle Potter, Ph.D., NCSP  
Chair, Legislative Committee  
Maryland School Psychologists' Association

Bradley D. Petry, Psy.D.  
President, 2019-2020  
Maryland School Psychologists' Association

---

<sup>1</sup>Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative (2011/12). *National survey of children's health*. [Data Query]. Retrieved from [www.childhealthdata.org/browse/survey?q=2257&r=1](http://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/survey?q=2257&r=1)

<sup>2</sup>Overstreet, S. & Mathews, T. (2011). Challenges associated with exposure to chronic trauma: Using a public health framework to foster resilient outcomes among youth. *Psychology in the Schools*, 48 (7). <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20584>

<sup>3</sup>Goodman, R. D., Miller, M. D., & West-Olatunji, C. A. (2012). Traumatic stress, socioeconomic status, and academic achievement among primary school students. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 4(3), 252-259. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0024912>

<sup>4</sup>Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. (2015). *Behavioral health trends in the United States: Results from the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (HHS Publication No. SMA 15-4927, NSDUH Series H-50). Retrieved from <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/>