



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

**Bill: Senate Bill 896: Commission on Student Behavioral Health and Mental Health Treatment**

**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.

We write specifically to provide support to Senate Bill 896 – Commission on Student Behavioral Health and Mental Health Treatment. This bill establishes a commission to “study, evaluate, update, and revise” guidelines related to behavioral health practices in schools. The commission will make recommendations to improve on those current practices and create and/or revise guidelines for best practices in student behavioral healthcare.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, one in five children and adolescents experience a significant mental health problem during their school years. These same statistics indicate that approximately 75-80% of those children will not receive any mental health treatment. This is for a variety of reasons, but in general, is mostly due to lack of access. Even students whose families have adequate health insurance struggle to find providers in the community, many of whom do not accept any insurance plans. The National Association of School Psychologists reports that of students who do receive mental health treatment, about 80% of that treatment is provided in schools by qualified providers such as school psychologists.

Currently, school systems frequently use a piecemeal strategy to provide mental health supports to students that consists of contracting with non- and for-profit organizations. The counselors provided by these organizations are meant to supplement the generally inadequate staffing of school-employed mental health providers (i.e., school psychologists, school counselors, and school social workers).

The Commission created by Senate Bill 896 is desperately needed in Maryland. MSPA strongly supports this bill and looks forward to working with other Commission members following the passage of this bill. We respectfully urge a favorable report on SB896 – Commission on Student Behavioral Health and Mental Health Treatment. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please contact us at [legislative@mSPAonline.org](mailto:legislative@mSPAonline.org).

Respectfully submitted,

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