



Delegate Anne R. Kaiser, Chair
Delegate Alonzo T. Washington, Vice Chair
Ways and Means Committee, House of Delegates
House Office Building, Room 131
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Bill: House Bill 515: Public Schools – Staff Members - Report

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, 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 House Bill 515 – Public Schools – Staff Members – Report. The bill requires county boards of education to submit a report to governmental stakeholders and groups outlining the ratio of students to specifically identified staff members. These staff members include school counselors, school psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, and bilingual facilitators. This group of certificated professionals represents a significant system of support available to our students in public schools. School psychologists, school counselors, and social workers, in particular, are the frontline mental health providers in our public schools. Approximately 4 of every 5 students who receive mental health treatment receives it from one of those professionals, inside the schoolhouse.

As you likely know, a significant number of our students face mental health challenges. These challenges frequently affect those students' ability to access instruction, make appropriate academic progress, and to demonstrate appropriate social and behavioral functioning. Unfortunately, the dedicated, highly trained school staff members meant to address these issues are stretched to the maximum. *The nationally recommended ratio for school psychologists is 1:500. Currently, the state average hovers around 1:1500, three times what is considered to be adequate to provide comprehensive services to our schools and students.* In certain LEAs, some school psychologists face ratios upwards of 1:3500. Additionally, most school psychologists in Maryland serve at least two schools, with some serving as many as five or more individual schools or programs. This severely restricts how and when we are available to each of our schools. Similarly, our colleagues in school counseling, who provide equally vital services to students and schools, also work under untenable ratios far in excess of the recommended 1:250.

School psychologists are highly trained professionals, and under Maryland regulations, provide comprehensive psychological services to students in schools. This bill provides us with vital information necessary to move forward with ensuring all students have appropriate access to their school psychologist. MSPA is in strong support of House Bill 515, 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.

Respectfully submitted,

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