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HB 1557 – Support
Public Schools – Health Services – County Boards of Education and Health Departments

Chairwoman Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington and Ways and Means Committee Members,

HB 1557 is introduced to support the increasing importance of providing health support and services to students in the school setting by clarifying the collaborative responsibilities of both the school system and public health partners, establishing which health related data should be housed with the local public health department rather than with the local schools, requires the formalization of policies and practices for the sharing of identifiable and de-identifiable student health-related data between the two, and establishes a Health Specialist position in both the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and the Maryland State Department of Education to improve implementation of and oversight and ensure quality and effectiveness of health programs and services delivered in the school setting throughout the state. The Health Coordinators would also be tasked with regularly updating the School Health Guidelines, some sections of which have not been reviewed in over 10 years

Health Specialists in MDH and MSDE should work together to establish the clinical and administrative policies and protocols for students' health services. The local county board of education and county health department will be tasked with implementing these policies and managing a system that collects and protects student health data based on written and publically available policies, rather than ad hoc Memoranda of Understanding.

Whether behavioral health support, vision and hearing testing, anti-obesity programming or school-based clinics, schools have become a significant place for identifying and addressing public health issues affecting children. After all, schools are where the kids are. In order to allow teachers to teach and administrators to administrate, it is important that the health support be available in the schools, that the most appropriate relationship between local school systems and local public health be established, and that there be adequate support at the state and local level. To that end, HB 1557 better defines the role and pathway of coordination of each of the partners.

I respectfully request a favorable report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terri L. Hill".