



**Board of Education of Howard County  
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate,  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
March 23, 2022**

**Board of Education  
of Howard County**

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**HB0513: FAVORABLE  
Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Support Services Program -  
Established**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **HB0513 Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Support Services Program – Established** as an investment in the mental health needs of our youngest learners.

HB0513 establishes the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program within the Division of Early Childhood Development for MSDE. MSDE must identify initially eligible children who may suffer from developmental, social, emotional, or behavioral issues for enrollment in the program. “Initially eligible” is defined under the bill as children under six who are enrolled in child care and publicly funded full-day Pre-Kindergarten. The program must aid children enrolled by referring to appropriate clinics or programs, training, coaching and mentoring teachers and caregivers in addressing challenging behaviors, building community resource partnerships and working to ensure children have stable, quality child care programs. Most notably, HB0513 requires the Governor to appropriate \$3 million, as amended in the House, to fund the services of the program annually. If funds allow, the program shall aid “potentially eligible” children who are at least 6 and enrolled in Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade.

Currently the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) works with our local community partners to provide early intervention services as described under this bill, including:

- The Howard County Infants and Toddlers Program is a countywide system of coordinated, interagency, multidisciplinary early intervention services. HCPSS, the Howard County Health Department, and the Howard County Department of Social Services provide services to eligible infants, toddlers, and their families.
- The Preschool Child Find Team is an interdisciplinary team that provides identification services to children from three to five years of age who may have a disability including developmental delay. The team includes an educational diagnostician, a speech-language pathologist, a psychologist, an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, an audiologist, a pediatrician, and a nurse. A parent or guardian, medical personnel, or other concerned individual may make a referral.
- CARE (Child and Adolescent Resources and Education) for Howard County Families is a free service provided by the Howard County Office of Children

and Families, with the support of Howard County Department of Community Resources and Services, the Howard County Local Children's Board, MSDE, Howard County Mental Health Authority and the Governor's Office for Children.

To the extent HB0513 would enable and extend continued collaborative efforts at the local level and provide funding to support referrals, provide teacher training, collaborate with community resources and seek quality childcare programs, HCPSS staff supports the financial prioritization of early identification of children with developmental, social, emotional, or behavioral needs.

For these reasons, we urge a FAVORABLE report of HB0513 from this Committee.