

**Testimony in Support with Amendments to House Bill 1231
Public Schools – Student Health Professional Retention Program –
Established**

**Ways and Means
Tuesday, March 8th, 2022
1:00 p.m.**

**Lauren Lamb
Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association supports, with amendments, HB 1231, which would develop a program for student health professionals (SHPs) that includes career steps and salary incentives with the goal of recruiting and retaining highly qualified providers to the profession.

MSEA represents 76,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students for the careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Student health professionals (SHPs) play a critical role in students' wellbeing and development at school. Without school psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, audiologists, and speech-language pathologists, many students would not have the support they need to grow and thrive physically, socially, and emotionally. SHPs are essential educators and should be respected and paid as such.

MSEA tenaciously advocated for the inclusion of SHPs in the career ladder and pay incentives outlined in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The Blueprint represents groundbreaking investment in our schools and educators, and while its recognition of highly qualified teachers is an important step, it is not comprehensive. By excluding SHPs, the Blueprint did not wholly reflect the contributions of so many educators who make learning possible.



To ensure equitable implementation and to maintain the role of collective bargaining in issues of pay and promotion, we strongly recommend that SHPs receive adequate recognition for their contributions to our education system by adding to existing provisions in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, rather than through the creation of a distinct program.

This legislation addresses a critical need, and MSEA agrees that every effort must be made to recognize and pay SHPs for their contributions. We believe that including SHPs in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future is the best approach to achieving an equitable outcome.