



Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair
Delegate Alonzo T. Washington, Vice Chair
Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building, Room 131
Annapolis, MD 21401

January 20, 2022

Bill: House Bill 84 – Education – Crimes on School Grounds – Application

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA), a professional organization representing about 500 school psychologists in Maryland. We advocate for the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic wellbeing of students and families across the state.

Many students who exhibit disruptive behavior in school are in fact communicating their mental and emotional distress in the only way they know how. HB 84 would remove school disruption from the short list of criminal offenses that are specific to and typically enforced in schools. It is unconscionable that these children can be arrested and charged with a criminal offense especially as these arrests disproportionately affect students of color.

HB 84 will help us to break the “school-to-prison” pipeline which derails the lives of too many Maryland students. Schools need better and more humane, student-centered discipline procedures, integrated with comprehensive systems of emotional and behavioral support for these students with such needs. School psychologists stand ready to help our schools to develop and to grow these supports, and to provide the mental health supports many of the students need.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 84. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please contact us at legislative@mSPAonline.org or Scott Tiffin at stiffin@policypartners.net or (443) 350-1325.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Phipps, M.Ed., Ed.S., NCSP
Chair, Legislative Committee
Maryland School Psychologists' Association