

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 513
Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program –
Established**

**Ways and Means
Thursday, 2/17/2022
3:00 p.m.**

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The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 513, which would implement and fund the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program within the State Department of Education's Division of Early Childhood Development with the goal of promoting positive mental and behavioral health practices for young children by providing certain referrals and services for children, families, teachers, and caregivers.

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).

The Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Project, first piloted by the State Department of Education in 2002, has a strong track record of providing preventative mental health support for children and caregivers. The benefits of early child mental health consultation are numerous, including improved social-emotional competence for children, reduced rates of suspension and expulsion, and reduced teacher turnover.¹ As mental health concerns increase in the wake of the Covid-19 global pandemic, providing families, educators, and children with preventative social-emotional development tools is an important step toward

¹ The Georgetown Manual For School-Based Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Services, https://www.ecmhc.org/documents/FCC_Manual_2020_Proof2.pdf, p. 9 (Accessed February 15, 2022)

improving school climates and strengthening relationships.² This legislation would implement a proven-effective program and ensure its funding going forward.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on House Bill 513.

² Maryland's Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation: Fiscal Year 2020 Brief, https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/19/legislative_brief_fy2020_3.pdf, p. 1 (Accessed February 15, 2022)