

Mohammed Choudhury

State Superintendent of Schools

BILL: House Bill 513 DATE: February 17, 2022

SUBJECT: Infant and Early Childhood **COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means

Mental Health Consultation Program – Established

POSITION: Support with Amendments

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EXPLANATION:

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) supports **House Bill 513 – Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program – Established**, which would formally establish the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Consultation Program within MSDE to promote positive mental and behavioral health practices for young children by providing certain referrals and services for children, families, teachers, and caregivers.

House Bill 513 will expand on the existing well-established IECMH Consultation Program in several ways, most importantly by tripling current funding levels that will expand the number of children served and provide further outreach to areas that are not adequately served. Additionally, this bill will allow the consultation program to serve children ages 0-5, as well as children enrolled in kindergarten through second grade.

The success and sustainability of this program is crucial as it addresses the need for mental health support for children and provides training and coaching to build the capacity of teachers and providers to better recognize, identify, and provide interventions as needed. HB 513 recognizes that early childhood mental health requires a systems approach as it includes partnering with early learning programs and community stakeholders serving children and families.

Social and emotional development of children is the foundation for all academic learning. The IECMH reaches children in early learning programs, supporting the teacher and provider in providing supportive learning environments and teaching them the skills necessary for demonstrating school readiness.

This program also focuses on prevention by supporting the family in providing necessary community support and resources. Early learning programs are frequently the first to identify significant mental and behavioral challenges children and families are experiencing and through this program are able to direct them to the appropriate support mechanisms.

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The Department requests one technical amendment that removes the direct reference that the Division of Early Childhood within MSDE be identified as the sole division charged with administering the program and instead use all-encompassing language that refers only to a representative from MSDE as a whole.

MSDE respectfully requests that you consider this information as you deliberate **HB 513**. Please contact Ary Amerikaner, at 410-767-0090, or ary.amerikaner@maryland.gov, for any additional information.