



HB1231 PUBLIC SCHOOLS - STUDENT HEALTH PROFESSIONAL RETENTION PROGRAM – ESTABLISHED

March 8, 2022

WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

Jeanette Ortiz, Esq., Legislative & Policy Counsel (410.703.5352)

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) supports with amendments **HB1231 Public Schools - Student Health Professional Retention Program - Established**. This bill establishes and provides for the administration of and funding for the Student Health Professional Retention Program. It defines “student health professional” as a person who is licensed to provide services to students in a public prekindergarten or public primary or secondary school. It requires MSDE, in coordination with the Maryland Department of Health and interested stakeholders, to study, make recommendations, establish a plan, evaluate, and report to the General Assembly on certain matters regarding the Program on or before January 1, 2023. The bill also provides for funding for the salary increases under the program.

AACPS recognizes the importance of promoting the positive mental health of all students through the development of impactful relationships and by teaching resilience. Student mental health is of particular importance during this time when AACPS students are faced with a global health pandemic and other challenges. School counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, pupil personnel workers, and school nurses collaborate with staff, parents/guardians, and the community to overcome barriers to learning. The emphasis on multi-tiered systems of support, which also include Section 504 accommodations and restorative practices, further supports this effort and AACPS Strategic Plan emphasizing relationships, rigor, and readiness for all students. By removing barriers, providing resources, and teaching appropriate social-emotional skills, students gain the tools to be productive citizens.

Local school systems would benefit from a Statewide effort to create a career ladder within the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future for student health professional jobs. This career ladder would be an asset in recruiting student health professionals, and it would allow AACPS to more actively compete with neighboring states to recruit and retain these professionals. Furthermore, it would be an incentive for individuals considering this career and could help alleviate critical shortages. While AACPS appreciates this legislation, the district recommends a couple of amendments.

AACPS respectfully requests that the bill be amended to emphasize recruitment and support of diverse candidates. Diverse school psychologists would be a benefit to our diverse student population as they navigate a variety of issues, including discrimination, bias, and cultural barriers; lack of access to resources and mental health providers; mental health stigma; poverty; social media; and trauma.

AACPS also requests that the bill be amended to add other student health professionals, including school counselors and pupil personnel workers, as they also provide critical services to students.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** committee report on HB1231.