

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 418
Mental Health – Workforce Development – Fund Established**

**House Health and Government Operations Committee
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The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 418, which would establish the Behavioral Health Workforce Investment Fund to provide reimbursement for costs associated with educating, training, certifying, recruiting, placing, and retaining behavioral health professionals and paraprofessionals, provide that money expended from the Fund is supplemental and not intended to supplant funding that would otherwise be appropriated, and require the Maryland Health Care Commission to conduct a comprehensive behavioral health workforce needs assessment on or before December 1, 2023.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. 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).

Behavioral health professionals, both in schools and in the community, are more essential than ever as students face increased mental health challenges in the wake of the pandemic. We support all efforts to strengthen and diversify the behavioral health pipeline in Maryland, and commend investments in recruiting, retaining, and supporting behavioral health professionals.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on House Bill 418.