



Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair
Delegate Ariana B. Kelly, Vice Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 11, 2023

Bill: House Bill 418 – Mental Health – Workforce Development – Fund Established

Position: Support

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Kelly, 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 well-being of students and families across the state. MSPA is in support of HB418.

This bill addresses several critical points in increasing and diversifying the Maryland mental health workforce, including: the lack of adequate funds for education and training for diverse individuals best positioned to work with minority populations; poor workforce retention in diverse and minority communities due to high levels of student loan debt combined with low salaries in community treatment centers; and the prevention of access to quality treatment due to the high cost of certification for the most effective evidence-based treatment.

Despite many highly motivated individuals who want to be part of the mental health workforce, there is a continued shortage of qualified practitioners, and large gaps in racially and ethnically diverse practitioners, and practitioners in rural areas. For example, 83% of school psychologists in Baltimore City Public Schools are white, although 73% of the students in Baltimore City are black. Additionally, the highest ratios of school psychologist to students in Maryland are in Worcester (1:1825), Washington (1:2190), and Talbot counties (1:2378), representing lack of access in rural communities. For comparison, the National School Psychology Association recommends a ratio of 1:500 school psychologists to students. HB418 recognizes that without funds, it is very difficult to increase the number of practitioners in the workforce.

For these reasons, the Maryland School Psychologists' Association asks for a FAVORABLE report on House Bill 418.

If we can provide any further information or be of assistance, please contact us at legislative@mSPAonline.org or Sarah Peters at speters@hbstrategies.us or 410-322-2320.

Respectfully submitted,

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