

**Committee:** Health and Government Operations Committee

**Bill:** House Bill 415 - Mental Health - Workforce Development - Fund Established

**Hearing Date:** February 21, 2023

**Position:** Support

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The Maryland School Counselors Association (MSCA) supports *House Bill 415- Mental Health – Workforce Development -Fund Established*. The bill creates a special fund to support initiatives to increase the number of behavioral health professionals. A stakeholder advisory committee would make recommendations on a range of strategies, which could include tuition assistance and support for clinical placements.

We are supporting the bill because schools are facing a behavioral health crisis. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth between the ages of 10 and 24 years of age.<sup>1</sup> However, students and their families struggle to get the help they need, as nearly all of Maryland has a behavioral health professional shortage.<sup>2</sup> This bill will provide the framework for Maryland to address this issue. The fund can support initiatives to increase the number of people entering the behavioral health field, as well as retaining them.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Robyn Elliott at [relliott@policypartners.net](mailto:relliott@policypartners.net).

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7008a1.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/charts/7?state=MD>