

Committee: House Ways and Means Committee

Bill Number: House Bill 488 - Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program - Mental Health Professionals in Public Schools

Hearing Date: February 15, 2023

Position: Favorable with Amendments

The Maryland School Counselors Association supports *House Bill 488 – Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program – Mental Health Professionals in Public Schools*. The bill establishes permanent eligibility for mental health professionals in schools to participate in the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program.

Maryland students are facing a behavioral health crisis. In the 2022 Databook, the Annie E. Casey Foundation reported that the number of youth experiencing anxiety and depression jumped from 9.4% to 12.8% between 2016 and 2022 in Maryland.¹ We need more mental health providers in schools. This bill would focus state resources on recruiting and retaining mental health providers through a loan assistance repayment program.

We would like to request an amendment to clarify that school counselors could participate in the program:

On page 2 in line 12 insert “SCHOOL COUNSELOR” after “SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISOR”

We ask for a favorable report with this amendment. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

¹ <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2022kidscountdatabook-2022.pdf>