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February 12, 2023

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

Position: Support

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state, is writing to express **SUPPORT** for **House Bill 488 - Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program - Mental Health Professionals in Public Schools**, which has the potential to increase access to critically important behavioral health services delivered to school children in Maryland.

Addressing the behavioral health needs of Maryland's school children is an essential role for our public schools – students perform better academically, and grow up to be better-functioning adults, when these needs are met along the way. School systems struggle to find enough qualified behavioral health professionals to meet the increasingly high demand for their services. Adding school psychologists to the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Program will enable more of these well-trained school-employed behavioral health professionals to be available to Maryland students. We **STRONGLY SUPPORT** HB 488, and request that the bill receives a **FAVORABLE** report.

The Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Program is open to a wide variety of professionals employed in Maryland by a state agency, nonprofit, or local government serving high needs populations, including both low-income populations and high-needs geographic areas. Beyond our public schools, many of these other employers are also experiencing serious shortages of behavioral health staff, including psychologists. In order to expand citizen access to behavioral health services across the state, in the near future we would hope that the program can be expanded to include licensed psychologists.

Thank you for considering our comments on HB 488. If we can be of any further assistance as the House – Ways and Means Committee considers this bill, please do not hesitate to contact MPA's Legislative Chair, Dr. Pat Savage at mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Resnik, Psy.D.

Rebecca Resnick, Psy.D.

President

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs

R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.

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