



# Maryland Occupational Therapy Association

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PO Box 36401, Towson, Maryland 21286 ♦ [mota-members.com](http://mota-members.com)

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>House Ways and Means Committee</b>
<b>Bill Number:</b>	<b>House Bill 1317 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Use of Reimbursement Funds by Schools</b>
<b>Hearing Date:</b>	<b>February 28, 2024</b>
<b>Position:</b>	<b>Support with Amendment</b>

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The Maryland Occupational Therapy Association (MOTA) supports *House Bill 1317 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Use or Reimbursement Funds by Schools*. The bill would direct funding from new Medicaid reimbursement opportunities to strengthen school health programs.

MOTA has been working to address the long-standing shortages of occupational therapy practitioners and other school health providers in schools. We participated in the the work of the Commission to Study the Healthcare Workforce Crisis in Maryland. The Commission concluded that Maryland is far behind other states in addressing health professional shortages.<sup>1</sup>

We have a path forward to address the shortage of school health providers. In March 2023, the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services released new federal guidance on reimbursement for school health services.<sup>2</sup> This guidance removes regulatory barriers and offers the opportunity for additional federal resources for school health through Medicaid reimbursement.

We would request two amendments which we believe align with the intent of the bill:

Amendment 1: Clarifying which practitioners may be reimbursed. Federal law and regulations already delineate who may bill for school health services. The practitioner must be authorized to practice either by a health occupation board or education agency. We recommend aligning the bill’s language to reflect federal guidance:

On page 1 in lines 21-23:

~~(2) "PROVIDER" MEANS A SCHOOL AUDIOLOGIST, SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST, SCHOOL SPEECH PATHOLOGIST, AND ANY OTHER HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONER WHO PROVIDES SERVICES TO A STUDENT IN A SCHOOL SETTING. PRACTITIONER WHO IS AUTHORIZED TO PRACTICE IN A SCHOOL SETTING UNDER THE HEALTH OCCUPATIONS ARTICLE OR EDUCATION ARTICLE INCLUDING~~

- ~~\_\_\_\_\_ (i) nurses;~~
- ~~\_\_\_\_\_ (ii) licensed clinical social workers;~~
- ~~\_\_\_\_\_ (iii) professional counselors;~~
- ~~\_\_\_\_\_ (iv) marriage and family therapists;~~
- ~~\_\_\_\_\_ (v) occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants;~~
- ~~\_\_\_\_\_ (vi) speech language pathologists;~~
- ~~\_\_\_\_\_ (vii) physical therapists;~~
- ~~\_\_\_\_\_ (viii) school counselors; and~~
- ~~\_\_\_\_\_ (ix) school psychologists.~~

Amendment 2: Clarifying how funding may be spent. As we understand the bill's intention, new resources from Medicaid billing for school health must be directed towards the school health workforce. We would recommend a change in language to recognize that school health professionals are paid through salaries rather than stipend arrangements as well as that educational opportunities are not typically labeled as internships:

*On page 2 in lines 8-15*

- (1) ADDITIONAL POSITIONS FOR PROVIDERS;*
- (2) PAID INTERNSHIPS FOR STUDENTS SEEKING TO BECOME PROVIDERS; EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS IN ACCREDITED HEALTH PROFESSIONAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS TO WORK UNDER A PROVIDER AS PERMITTED UNDER THE HEALTH OCCUPATIONS ARTICLE OR THE EDUCATION ARTICLE;*
- (3) STIPENDS SALARY INITIATIVES FOR PROVIDERS THAT ARE DESIGNED TO ADDRESS PROBLEMS IN PROVIDER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION; AND*
- (4) STIPENDS SALARY INITIATIVES FOR PROVIDERS WORKING IN LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS THAT ARE DESIGNED TO ADDRESS PROBLEMS IN PROVIDER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.*

We urge a favorable report on this bill with our proposed clarifying amendments. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at [relliott@policypartners.net](mailto:relliott@policypartners.net) or (443) 926-3443.

<sup>1</sup>[https://health.maryland.gov/docs/SB%20440%20Ch.%20708%20\(2022\)%20E2%80%93%202023%20Final%20Report%20E2%80%93%20Commission%20to%20Study%20the%20Heal.pdf](https://health.maryland.gov/docs/SB%20440%20Ch.%20708%20(2022)%20E2%80%93%202023%20Final%20Report%20E2%80%93%20Commission%20to%20Study%20the%20Heal.pdf)

<sup>2</sup><https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/delivering-service-school-based-settings-comprehensive-guide-medicaid-services-and-administrative>