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Position: FAV

Senate Bill 1080 State Personnel – Maryland Department of Health – Pay Rates
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
February 28, 2024
Position: SUPPORT

Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as behavioral health). We appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of SB 1080.

SB 1080 would require that employees of the Regional Institutes for Children and Adolescents (RICAs), both in Rockville and in Baltimore, receive pay equal to the rate of similarly trained and qualified employees at Clifton T. Perkins Hospital.

Several years ago, a competency program was established at RICA Rockville, whereby justice-involved youth who have been found incompetent to stand trial are court-ordered to RICA Rockville for rehabilitative services. These youth have serious and complex mental health needs that often result in challenging and aggressive behavior. Accordingly, staff at RICA Rockville have received specialized training.

The patient population at RICA Baltimore has also seen a change in recent years that requires enhanced training and qualifications. Like their colleagues at RICA Rockville, staff at RICA Baltimore are receiving more youth with challenging and aggressive behaviors and youth with serious co-occurring developmental disorders and mental health disorders. In fact, RICA Baltimore was forced to suspend admissions for an extended period of time because their staff did not have the capacity to manage so many youth with such complex needs.

These are critically important institutions that have struggled to hire and retain staff. SB 1080 would ensure the individuals working in these facilities are receiving pay that is commensurate with staff at Clifton T. Perkins Hospital, who are serving a similarly challenging population with severe and complex mental health disorders.

For these reasons, MHAMD supports SB 1080 and urges a favorable report.

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Uploaded by: Bennett Robley

Position: FAV

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Budget & Taxation Committee
SB1080 – Maryland Department of Health - Pay Rates
Feb 27, 2024**

SUPPORT

Good afternoon Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and committee members. My name is Bennet Robley, and I am a teacher at RICA-Baltimore. On behalf of the teachers at RICA, we seek a favorable report for SB1080.

SB1080 addresses an oversight four years in the making. In 2020, when Senate Bill 693/CH576 was passed, it provided a desperately needed pay differential to mental health workers who are very difficult to recruit and retain. The bill also required facilities to have corrections trained security personnel proportionate to the size and security needs of the facility.

The impact of the 2020 legislation was positive and helped with the retention of experienced residential staff here at RICA Baltimore. Additionally, the new security team has helped immeasurably with managing violent student outbursts. Before 2020, instructional staff were the only staff available to respond to violent incidents and perform physical restraint during the school day. Teaching staff are still trained and expected to report to violent codes and go hands on, but the addition of the security team has significantly reduced the need for teachers to engage in physical restraints outside of our classrooms.

Despite this vast improvement, the omission of bargaining unit G and educational staff from the bill, we have continued to struggle with hiring and retaining educational staff. Every year, we have at least 2 out of 6 state teaching positions open. One position we haven't been able to fill for over 2 years. The other has been filled twice but only with candidates that were already staff at RICA Baltimore, as an instructional assistant, or were previously employed at the school decades ago and are returning from retirement. We have not been able to recruit new teachers from outside of RICA Baltimore in more than four years.

When candidates decline offers of employment, they frequently state that they do not wish to be 12-month employees and fear for their safety. It takes a rare type of teacher to take a state position, working 8-hour days and through summer while assuming the risks to life and limb in this facility. State Teachers, as 12-month employees, perform many additional duties above and beyond teaching compared to a standard 10month teacher. We are tasked with supervising children whenever school closes early for heat, lack of water, or inclement weather. We come in on snow days to run programming, and each of us performs additional critical duties such as ensuring the school is compliant with testing obligations.

State Teachers are a critical part of the mental health infrastructure, yet we are not afforded the same pay differential as all the other colleagues in our facilities. This is a significant drag on morale for current teachers and is preventing the benefit of the additional pay to recruit new talent.

A second, more important drag on morale, is the lack of acknowledgement that teachers are still being assaulted and we do not receive the same pay differential for assuming the same risks as our coworkers who already receive the hazard pay. Attached are photos of a handful of assaults that have occurred at RICA Baltimore against teaching staff this school year.

As I write this, we have just passed the 110-day mark of the school year. In that time, we had 25 educational staff assaulted out of 45. Some teachers have been assaulted upwards of 4 times this year alone. We have been bitten, hit with furniture, punched, kicked, given concussions, spit on, and had sharp objects (like a pencil) held to teacher's throat. We have had students openly state their plans to murder staff.

It is important to note that RICA has less than 50 students currently. In the past we had more than 100 students enrolled. With the hospital overstay crisis, there is more need than ever for RICA to be fully functioning and operating at full capacity. Our facility has been unable to hire needed staff and even if we were fully staffed, the acuity level of the students we are accepting is so extreme that we would still be hard pressed to admit more students given the level of impulsivity and violence our population currently exhibits. The overstay crisis has made working in our facility exponentially more dangerous compared to previous years.

Teachers are a vital part of keeping RICA Baltimore functioning and helping children in need. We are being injured just like our coworkers. In fact, as of today (February 16th) we have recorded a minimum of 102 "Physical Assault on Staff" referrals or as we call them, PA's. I say minimum because some students are highflyers who create daily crisis situations, and our digital data collection tool only supports 300 referrals per student. Any referrals accrued over that limit requires that old data is printed on paper and stored in physical files. These high-flying students have an average of around 7 PAs on staff each, with one student recording over 25 assaults on their own. Please note that a PA referral is only generated when staff is hit, it does not record all the other times we have not been hit by flying furniture or wayward punches. What needs to be acknowledged is that security responds to violent incidents after they happen. Teachers are the front line, utilizing verbal de-escalation techniques to manage student behaviors. When our efforts fail, and violence occurs, we are the first to feel it. Security then responds to assist us. We still get injured.

There are not many state teachers, and we are a very rare breed. We have expertise that can only be learned working in facilities like RICA. We are battle tested and experts in a very specialized field. Teachers that stay at MDH facilities have no expectation of getting rich and famous. We don't take the job because it's an easy day. We stay because we believe that the children in our facilities, many of which have no one, deserve caring adults who will educate them. We only ask that we are given the same respect as our coworkers and acknowledgement of the risks we face.

For these reasons, we ask the committee for a favorable report on SB1080.

Examples of injuries sustained in RICA Baltimore's Classrooms:







SB 1080 - Maryland Department of Health - Pay Rate

Uploaded by: Denise Riley

Position: FAV



A Union of Professionals
AFT-Maryland

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Kenya Campbell
PRESIDENT

LaBrina Hopkins
SECRETARY-TREASURER

**Written Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
SB 1080 - State Personnel - Maryland Department of Health - Pay Rates
February 28, 2024**

SUPPORT

Chair Guzzone and members of the Committee. AFT-MD supports SB 1080, a bill to enhance the pay rate for teachers employed by the Maryland Department of Health in facilities serving a forensic population. The critical role these educators play in providing direct services to a unique and at-risk population demands our advocacy for their well-deserved compensation.

The facilities place teachers in direct service, exposing them to risks inherent in working with a forensic population. The need for a stable and qualified staff is paramount for the continuity of treatment, retention, and recruitment efforts. The proposed increase in compensation is a crucial step towards attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers, ultimately leading to improved services and better patient outcomes.

The nine educators targeted by this bill are professionals holding master's degrees and certifications, underscoring the expertise required for their roles. Despite their qualifications and the challenging nature of their work, these teachers currently receive compensation that lags behind their counterparts in city and county schools.

This bill rightly seeks to rectify this disparity by aligning the pay scale of teachers in state mental hospitals with other essential personnel, such as building security, nurses, and care assistants. All these professionals are united in the serious task of providing care for juvenile patients, whose mental and behavioral health complications may manifest in impulsive and assaultive behavior.

The challenges associated with delivering safe and stable care in a demanding environment underscore the critical importance of adequate compensation for these dedicated professionals. The proposed increase of two pay grades is a step towards addressing the persistent challenges in hiring and retaining a high-quality workforce necessary for serving a forensic population.

Again, we urge the committee to provide a favorable report for SB 1080. Thank you.

SB 1080 - B&T - HOSP- Letter of Support .pdf

Uploaded by: Jason Caplan

Position: FAV



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

February 28, 2024

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Senate Bill 1080 – State Personnel - Maryland Department of Health - Pay Rates - Letter of Support

Dear Chair Guzzone and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) submits this letter of support for Senate Bill (SB) 1080 – State Personnel - Maryland Department of Health - Pay Rates.

SB 1080 requires members of the Department's bargaining Unit G for Engineering, Scientific, and Administrative Professionals who work at Clifton T. Perkins Hospital Center, who do not receive a forensic pay premium, to receive a salary that is at least two grades higher than the employee's pay rate as of June 30, 2023. Per the second portion of the bill, employees in these same affected classifications located in other Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) or Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) facilities meeting the bill's admission criteria will also receive increases. SB 1080 will affect the positions located at Clifton T. Perkins Hospital Center, Springfield Hospital Center, and Spring Grove Hospital Center. Qualifying classifications which do not exist at the Clifton T. Perkins Hospital Center will receive a one grade adjustment. In addition, SB 1080 is applicable to certain employees at the Regional Institutes for Children and Adolescents in Baltimore and Rockville, and will require a salary equal to the pay rate that was effective July 1, 2020, for a similarly trained, qualified, or licensed employee at Clifton T. Perkins Hospital Center.

The Department supports the adjustment of salaries for its employees to promote equity within the facilities and to help ensure that they are being fairly compensated for their work. In addition, the Department also recognizes this legislation's potential to support the Moore-Miller Administration's efforts to grow and retain State personnel by helping to support and strengthen its workforce.

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs, at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "LH Scott", is positioned above the typed name.

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary

1080.pdf

Uploaded by: JERRY SMITH

Position: FAV



MARYLAND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES COUNCIL

AFT, AFL-CIO Local 6197

A union of professionals
in service to the people
of Maryland.

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Budget & Taxation Committee
SB1080 – Maryland Department of Health - Pay Rates
Feb 27, 2024**

FAVORABLE

Good afternoon Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and committee members. My name is Jerry Smith, President of the Maryland Professional Employees Council (MPEC), AFT Local 6197, the certified collective bargaining agent for professional state employees classified in unit G. MPEC is calling for a favorable report on SB1080. This bill requires that certain employees at the Regional Institute for Children and Adolescents and Clifton T. Perkins Hospital, who do not currently receive the forensic pay rate that all other employees working in these facilities receive, be paid an equal forensic pay rate.

This bill allows the 9 educators employed at certain Department of Health facilities to be included in the forensic pay premium. Their dedication and commitment to educating children and adolescents with high acuity levels, as well as mental and emotional health issues, deserve recognition through the forensic pay this bill provides.

Educators working in facilities like RICA and Perkins Hospital possess unique abilities and rare qualities that are essential for meeting the demands of educating students in these specialized environments. Supporting and retaining these educators is crucial for Maryland, as it enables the state to draw on their institutional experience and expertise. By doing so, the state can ensure that students receive the best possible education and support.

For these reasons, MPEC again calls for a favorable report to SB 1080.

Thank you.



SB 1080 MLawson Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Malinda Lawson

Position: FAV

SB 1080: State Personnel – Maryland Department of Health – Pay Rates

Budget and Taxation Committee

February 28, 2024

Good afternoon Chairperson and committee members,

My name is Dr. Malinda Lawson, and I am here today to testify on behalf of SB 1080. The passing of this legislation would recognize the direct patient care that I provide daily while working with the criminally involved patients at Clifton T. Perkins Hospital Center (CTPHC) and would allow my pay to reflect the dangerousness of the environment where I am employed.

For the past 11 years, I have been the only teacher at Clifton T. Perkins Hospital Center. I am part of the admission ward treatment team so that I may begin working with those individuals who are under 21 and have a current Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for special education within the timeframes required by state and federal laws. The patients who are under 21 that I work with may have limited cognitive ability, developmental disabilities, emotional disabilities and/or mental illness which can cause severe behaviors especially when in a maximum-security environment. All CTPHC patients have committed crimes severe enough to require the most restrictive environment found in a maximum-security facility. These crimes can include Murder, Attempted Murder, 1st and 2nd degree Assault, Arson, and Sex Crimes to name a few. When teaching, I am in a classroom with up to ten patients by myself with the closest security officer being in the hallway approximately 40 feet away. Two more officers are stationed downstairs while every other officer must run at least 200 feet, go up a flight of stairs, and then go into my classroom to assist in any situation requiring assistance. There are also at least two locked doors that officers must unlock and travel through along the way. As a Marine Corps veteran, I would like to believe that I could protect myself until assistance arrives, but protocols and policies do not allow for any measures to be used except those authorized by the State making myself more vulnerable. Maneuvers learned while on active duty would definitely not be authorized for use on patients by the State of Maryland. During my time at CTPHC, I have personally been exposed to multiple patient's private parts, both up close and from a distance, and have been threatened to be raped several times while being told explicitly how they were going to accomplish that. I have been grabbed, rubbed on, and held onto in various places on my body by different patients throughout my eleven years of employment. Often patients fixate on one person believing that person is the one who sent them to CTPHC, is keeping them at CTPHC, or is conspiring against them. Being accused of these acts is common and often resulted in me receiving threats, threatening behaviors,

and attempts to commit violence. I have witnessed patient-on-patient violence and patient-on-staff violence resulting in anything from a simple black eye to being hospitalized with broken eye sockets and/or other severe damage. I was in the building during the most recent riot on one of the wards resulting in panicked overhead pages requesting first all available officers, then all available males in the building, and finishing with a call for any and all available staff. We have patients who are already serving time and come to us from prisons such as North Branch for competency education for a crime they committed while incarcerated. Many of these types of patients have a prison mentality resulting in fights, sneakiness, and manipulation of both other patients and staff. Over the past several years, CTPHC has experienced an increase in the amount of drugs being brought into the facility. Being drug-induced can be dangerous by itself, but the result can be much more volatile when mixed with prescribed drugs or unmedicated mental illness. Other patients have limited cognitive ability making them an easy mark. These patients often experience fight or flight reactions, most commonly resulting in a fight. A combination of all these patients creates a dangerous work environment.

I support SB 1080 due to the often-occurring events and overall dangerousness of my work environment at Clifton T. Perkins Hospital Center described above. My personal experiences over the past 11 years working at Clifton T. Perkins Hospital Center have included being threatened with both violence and rape while being frequently exposed to male genitalia, having attempts to cause harm made toward me, and being physically assaulted in a sexual manner many times. Although CTPHC is a maximum security Forensic Psychiatric Hospital, these personal experiences are above and beyond what I would be subjected to in a typical school environment or in a school with students having the most severe behavior issues. Unfortunately, the behaviors of the patients have not changed in my 11 years at CTPHC, and I feel strongly in presuming that they will not change in the future. Previous legislation in 2020 enacted Forensic Pay for all other bargaining units working at CTPHC. At that time, I contacted Senator Guzzone's office and was informed that Unit G was inadvertently left out of the bill. I am here before you four years later asking you to vote favorably so I may be afforded the same forensic pay as my coworkers working in the same dangerous environment with the same, often volatile, criminally involved patients.

I ask that the committee votes FAVORABLY on SB 1080.

Thank you for your time,

Dr. Malinda Lawson
Director of Education/Teacher, CTPHC

SB 1080_ State Personnel - Maryland Department of

Uploaded by: tamika winkler

Position: FAV

CORY V. MCCRAY
Legislative District 45
Baltimore City

DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Health and Human Services

Vice Chair, Capital Budget

Executive Nominations Committee

Legislative Policy Committee

Joint Committee on Gaming Oversight



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Vote Yes for SB 1080

Bill Title: State Personnel - Maryland Department of Health - Pay Rates

Committee: Budget and Tax
Hearing 2/28 at 1:00 p.m.

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee,

I write to you today in full support of **senate bill 1080** concerning State Personnel within the Maryland Department of Health. This bill, aimed at enhancing the pay rates for certain employees within specified bargaining units, carries immense significance in ensuring equitable compensation for our dedicated workforce.

It is crucial to recognize the invaluable contributions made by our employees who directly engage with patients. Their tireless efforts and commitment to providing quality care deserve to be acknowledged and rewarded appropriately. By aligning the pay rates for these employees with their counterparts at Clifton T. Perkins Hospital, we not only affirm our commitment to fair compensation but also uphold the principle of parity across similar roles within our department.

Furthermore, the provision to equalize pay rates for employees working at the Regional Institutes for Children and Adolescents with those at Clifton T. Perkins Hospital underscores our commitment to fairness and equality in compensation. This measure acknowledges the importance of their work in providing essential services to vulnerable populations and seeks to rectify any disparities in pay that may exist.

I firmly believe that investing in our workforce is essential for fostering a culture of dedication, professionalism, and excellence within the Maryland Department of Health. By ensuring competitive pay rates, we not only attract top talent but also retain our experienced professionals, thereby enhancing the overall quality of services provided to the community.

I urge all honorable members of this committee to support **SB1080**, recognizing its importance in promoting fairness, equity, and respect for the invaluable contributions of our dedicated employees. Together, let us take this significant step towards ensuring a brighter and more prosperous future for all members of our department.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cory V. McCray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and a long horizontal stroke.

Cory V. McCray
45th District

SB 1080 Statement of Information.pdf

Uploaded by: Laura Vykol-Gray

Position: INFO



Maryland

DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET
AND MANAGEMENT

WES MOORE
Governor

ARUNA MILLER
Lieutenant Governor

HELENE GRADY
Secretary

MARC L. NICOLE
Deputy Secretary

SENATE BILL 1080 State Personnel – Maryland Department of Health – Pay Rates

STATEMENT OF INFORMATION

DATE: February 28, 2024

COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation

SUMMARY OF BILL: Senate Bill 1080 adds employees of the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to § 8-203 of the State Personnel and Pensions Article that requires a forensic pay premium for certain personnel who have direct contact with court-involved patients and work at the Regional Institutes for Children and Adolescents (RICA) - Baltimore and Rockville or a facility that had a forensic admission rate greater than 75% for the immediately preceding fiscal year. The legislation also adds employees in bargaining unit G (engineering, scientific, and administrative professionals) who meet the same criteria.

EXPLANATION: MDH has indicated that this legislation would have minimal impact as it only affects eight current employees. The cost to increase the salaries for these eight employees per the bill would be \$54,000, growing in the out-years for any additional salary increases. The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) would like to note that management works collaboratively through the collective bargaining process with agency leadership and exclusive bargaining representatives to negotiate changes in employees' salaries. DBM feels the changes proposed in Senate Bill 1080 would be more appropriate to address at the bargaining table.

**For additional information, contact Laura Vykol-Gray at
(410) 260-6371 or laura.vykol@maryland.gov**