



March 5, 2024

The Honorable Brian Feldman  
Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee  
2 West – Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – Senate Bill 917: Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools – Establishment

Dear Chairman Feldman and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS/WPS support Senate Bill 917: Public Schools – Restorative Practices Schools – Establishment (SB 917) because it demonstrates a comprehensive approach to promoting restorative practices in schools, aiming to improve student behavior, enhance school climate, and ultimately contribute to students' overall success and well-being. SB 917 emphasizes the importance of addressing students' social-emotional, psychological, and behavioral health. By integrating restorative practices into schools, SB 917 will create a more supportive and inclusive environment for students, which can positively impact their overall well-being. In addition, restorative practices focus on preventing conflict and addressing it in a constructive manner when it arises. By implementing these practices, schools can potentially reduce instances of disciplinary actions such as suspensions, expulsions, and school arrests, leading to a more positive school climate.

SB 917 also requires collaboration among various stakeholders, including local health departments, social services, and community support partnerships. This coordinated effort ensures that students receive timely access to necessary services and supports, enhancing the effectiveness of the restorative practices approach. Finally, SB 917 mandates training programs for school personnel to effectively implement restorative practices. This investment in professional development ensures that educators have the necessary skills and knowledge to create a restorative school culture.

Therefore, for all the reasons above, MPS and WPS ask the committee for a favorable report on SB 917. If you have any questions regarding this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at [tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com](mailto:tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com).

Respectfully submitted,  
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society  
Legislative Action Committee