

Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

Bill Number: SB 545 – Primary and Secondary Education – Public School Employees – Salaries

Hearing Date: February 28, 2024

Position: Support

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee:

My name is Kimberly Carr MacDonald and I am a high school counselor in Calvert County Public Schools. I have been a member of the CCPS community for almost 11 years and served as a school counselor for the past 20 years. Professional development has remained very important to me, in that not only does it foster individual growth but it positively impacts the school community.

Research has shown that students learn more from a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) than a non-NBCT according to the NBPT website. 91% of educators who hold NBCT status report a change in their instructional practices to include more use of data, a deepening of their content knowledge, and more effectively meeting the needs of their students. These were reasons enough for me to pursue National Board Certification.

In 2010, I attained National Board Certification in the area of School Counseling. In 2019, I renewed my National Boards with the understanding there would be no financial compensation or rewards as this was the case in Calvert County Public Schools. It was critical for me to uphold this standard of education and to continue to provide topnotch, research-based services to my school community.

The process to pursue any of the 25 National Board Certification areas is the same, as are the Five Core Proposition and 4 Components used by NBCTS as the vision for accomplished teaching and to evaluate Candidates, respectively (www.nbpts.org).

In the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, one of the programs includes "increasing the salary by \$10,000 for participating National Board Certified Teachers who are teachers actively teaching in Maryland public schools ([Maryland National Board Certified Teacher Incentive Program \(marylandpublicschools.org\)](http://MarylandNationalBoardCertifiedTeacherIncentiveProgram.marylandpublicschools.org))." However, there has been significant confusion in implementation of the Blueprint legislation, despite the Accountability Implementation Board (AIB) acknowledging that the career ladder includes school counselors. **SB 545 will offer a clear path for acknowledgement that salary increases are needed to recruit and retain school counselors.**

It is important to emphasize that school counselors are educators. We deliver counseling lessons to students in assemblies, classes, in small groups, and individually. Additionally, we provide education and resources to families in the form of presentations, as well as smaller formats. Teaching takes place in many entities to include an auditorium, a classroom, and our offices. Whereas the Blueprint defines teachers as teaching in the classroom setting, school counselors are not limited as such.

Upon polling all school counselors in Calvert County Public Schools, over 60% indicated they would pursue National Board Certification if included in the Blueprint receiving the same salary increase and compensation. Imagine across Maryland if other counties had similar statistics, the percentage of highly qualified school counselors to provide vital services to our students and members of our school

communities would be astoundingly impactful. This is an incredible figure for a data driven organization, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, that has shown much qualitative and quantitative success to the level that Maryland legislators are promoting teachers to pursue this endeavor.

More than ever, it is critical to recruit and retain highly qualified school counselors especially in the increasing climate of mental health needs as well as the changing demands of personal/social, academic, and career areas of students' lives. Providing competitive and equitable salary is a significant component to this need.

The school counseling profession is critical to the well-being and education of others. **I am asking for your support of Senate Bill 545.**

Sincerely,

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