

**Committee:** Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
**Bill Number:** Senate Bill 545 Primary and Secondary Education- Public School Employees - Salaries  
**Date:** February 28, 2024  
**Position:** Support

Good afternoon, my name is Daniela Helton and I am a Nationally Board Certified (NBCT) School Counselor at Little Bennett Elementary School in Clarksburg, Maryland. I strongly support ***Senate Bill 545 Primary and Secondary Education - Public School Employees - Salaries.***

There is a lot of confusion about the salary enhancement from the Maryland Blueprint as related to school counselors. After contacting the various Maryland school districts, I have found that:

- 4/24 school districts give school counselors the \$10,000 salary enhancement, 8 districts provide school counselors with salary enhancements that range from \$2,000-\$5,000 and the remaining 12 districts do not give any salary enhancements to NBCT school counselors.

I do not believe the Blueprint's intent was to cause such inequity. On the contrary the goal is to create an increased number of highly qualified educators to foster student success. 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. **Senate Bill 545 will offer a clear path for acknowledgement that salary increases are needed to recruit and retain school counselors.**

In a recent survey I conducted in Montgomery County, 68% of 143 school counselors reported that they would engage in the NBCT professional learning process if the salary enhancement was equitable and school counselors were included. How unfortunate that our students are missing out on the benefits they could reap from highly skilled mental health educators.

As an active school counselor, I teach 30 different classes and I provide ongoing social emotional lessons throughout the school year. Counseling groups are also available for students in order to address topics such as family changes, grief, anxiety, anger and social skills. Individual counseling sessions take place multiple times a day for students who need to speak to me so that I can listen and give support. I provide multiple ways of direct service to students and I partner and co teach with teachers to help children. Students in Maryland deserve the finest mental health educators. **I ask the Committee for a favorable committee report on Senate Bill 545 to ensure this happens.**

**School Counselor: Daniela Helton**

[daniela\\_s\\_helton@mcpsmd.org](mailto:daniela_s_helton@mcpsmd.org)

301-448-9451