

SB0545 MSPA Letter of Support .pdf

Uploaded by: Bradley Leposa

Position: FAV



Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

February 27th, 2024

Bill: Senate Bill 0545 - Primary and Secondary Education - Public School Employees - Salaries

Position: Support

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA) - which represents about 500 Maryland school psychologists - strongly supports Senate Bill 0545 Primary and Secondary Education - Public School Employees - Salaries. SB 0545 adds school psychologists and other school based mental health practitioners to the Blueprint's career ladder. Such a change would help attract new entrants to the school psychology profession and therefore help address Maryland's school psychologist shortage. Although the Assembly recently passed laudable legislation to attract new teachers and address students' increasingly severe mental health concerns, the lack of similar legislation ameliorating the school psychologist shortage threatens both those goals. As a result, although MSPA appreciates Maryland's current delicate fiscal situation, it must urge passage of SB 0545.

Unfortunately, Maryland falls behind states like New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware in the number of school psychologists employed per student. In addition, Maryland's current school psychologist per student ratio of 1 school psychologist for every 1066 students falls far short of the National Association of School Psychologists' recommended ratio of 1 school psychologist for every 500 students. For comparison, Massachusetts employs 1 school psychologist for every 686 students, and New York employs 1 school psychologist for every 629 students.¹ Evidently, Maryland's efforts to meet the NASP recommended ratio fall behind those of peer states.

The consequences of Maryland's school psychologist shortage for students, families, and school communities are dire. To prevent and address students' mental health concerns, The National Center for School Mental Health (NCSMH) recommends a continuum of supports originating in schools and continuing into community based institutions.² School psychologists' unique training in both education and mental health assessment and intervention enables them to play a vital role connecting school and community based elements of this continuum. However, the shortage prevents school psychologists from performing school-based prevention and intervention activities envisioned by the NCSMH. As a result, students' mental health challenges remain unaddressed until becoming severe enough to warrant treatment by community based providers or even assessment for a legally defined disabling condition. Much damage and suffering occurs before students' can access those supports.

¹ 2024. National Association of School Psychologists State Shortages Dashboard. Retrieved from:
<https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/state-shortages-data-dashboard>

² 2024. National Center for School Mental Health. University of Maryland School of Medicine. Retrieved from:
<https://www.schoolmentalhealth.org/resources/foundations-of-school-mental-health/>

The mental health crisis afflicting Maryland’s children, youth, and young adults continues to worsen.³ Moreover, teachers cite inadequate support for addressing those concerns as one of the primary reasons for decisions to leave their profession.⁴ Thus, although the Assembly took commendable steps to attract new teachers and address students’ mental health concerns, the omission of similar efforts for attracting, training, and retaining school based mental health professionals threatens those goals. In all, Maryland’s children, families, and communities will continue to suffer.

MSPA therefore applauds all legislation drafted to address the ongoing shortage. Thank you for considering our comments on SB 0545. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us at legislative@mSPAonline.org or Sarah Peters at speters@hbstrategies.us or 410-322-2320.

Respectfully submitted,

Bradley Leposa, PHD NCSP
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
Maryland School Psychologists’ Association.

³ 2024. AAP-AACAP-CHA Declaration of a National Emergency in Child and Adolescent Mental Health. Retrieved from: <https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/child-and-adolescent-healthy-mental-development/aap-aacap-cha-declaration-of-a-national-emergency-in-child-and-adolescent-mental-health/>

⁴ 2023. Rand Corporation. Teacher Well-Being and Intentions to Leave: Findings from the 2023 State of the American Teacher Survey. Retrieved from: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1108-8.html

Senate Virtual Testimony FINAL.pdf

Uploaded by: Daniela Helton

Position: FAV

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

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SB 545 - Public School Employees - Salaries.pdf

Uploaded by: Denise Riley

Position: FAV



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Kenya Campbell
PRESIDENT

LaBrina Hopkins
SECRETARY-TREASURER

**Written Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
SB 545 - Primary and Secondary Education - Public School Employees - Salaries
February 28, 2024**

SUPPORT

Chair Feldman and members of the Committee, AFT-Maryland asks for a favorable report on SB 545, which proposes to alter the minimum salary for certain public school employees. It recognizes the critical importance of fair compensation for educators and the significant impact it has on the quality of education provided to our students.

The inclusion of an alternative high-quality educator credential, which recognizes educators who meet rigorous standards in professional fields or specialties that do not have National Board Certification (NBC) standards. This provision ensures that educators across various disciplines are valued and fairly compensated for their expertise and dedication to their profession.

The proposal to increase the minimum salary for all public school employees to \$60,000, is a vital step towards ensuring that educators are compensated fairly for their essential role in shaping the future of our society. A competitive salary not only attracts and retains talented individuals in the teaching profession but also reflects the value we place on the critical work they do.

Furthermore, the provision for salary increases for qualified educators, including a \$10,000 salary increase for those awarded an NBC or alternative high-quality educator credential, and a \$7,000 increase for educators assigned to low-performing schools, demonstrates a commitment to addressing inequities in education and supporting educators in challenging environments.

I appreciate the attention given to ensuring that qualified educators who are eligible for multiple salary increases under the bill will receive all applicable increases, and that educators who receive a salary increase for teaching at a low-performing school will not lose that increase if the school's performance improves.

SB 545 represents a significant investment in our public education system and the professionals who dedicate their careers to our students. Thank you.

2024 MSCA SB 545 FAV 2.pdf

Uploaded by: Holly Kleiderlein

Position: FAV



Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

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

Hearing Date: February 28, 2024

Position: Support w/Amendments

The Maryland School Counselor Association (MSCA) supports *Senate Bill 545 – Primary and Secondary Education – Public School Employees – Salaries*. The bill provides salary increases for certain school personnel to improve recruitment and retention.

MSCA believes that school counselors may already be covered under the Blueprint legislation. However, there has been significant confusion in implementation of the Blueprint legislation. MSCA has made some progress in obtaining clarity. After MSCA wrote to the Accountability Implementation Board (AIB), the AIB acknowledged the career ladder covered school counselors.

We believe that Senate Bill 545 offers a clear path for acknowledgement that salary increases are needed to recruit and retain school counselors. Just like teachers, school counselors can obtain the additional credential of National Board Certification (NBC). We need to employ a comprehensive strategy, including salary incentives, to address the shortage of school counselors in Maryland. The Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education’s 2019 report adopted the nationally recommended ratio of 250 students per school counselor. However, per MSDE data, many of our counties are significantly above this recommended ratio, with several counties having over 1,000 students per counselor.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Jocelyn I. Collins at [jcollins@policypartners.net](mailto:collins@policypartners.net).

SB 545 - Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Kenzie Funk

Position: FAV



**Testimony in SUPPORT of
Senate Bill 545: Primary and Secondary Education – Public School Employees – Salaries**

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: Favorable

February 28, 2024

At Strong Schools Maryland, we work to support the faithful implementation and full funding of the promises legislated through the landmark Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The Blueprint recognizes the necessity of educators. As a state, we must strive to fairly compensate educators for the key role they play in the development of our students and incentivize a diverse array of talented individuals to work in the field. As such, Strong Schools Maryland supports SB 545 as it sets a mandate for the minimum salary for Maryland public school teachers.

Current Maryland educator salaries vary by district with minimum salaries reaching as low as \$43,900 annually, falling short of the promised standards in the Blueprint.¹ Furthermore, the National Center for Education Statistics published research indicating that 44% of public schools reported teaching vacancies, with more than half of these vacancies attributed to resignations as of the 2022 school year.²

We are facing a teacher shortage, and the lack of educators directly impacts the quality of our students' education. Students deserve educators and school leaders that reflect their diverse array of backgrounds and experiences. To attract and retain this teaching workforce, we must adequately invest fiscal resources in our teachers.

The Blueprint raises the starting salaries for teachers in Maryland to \$60,000 while incorporating certification pay raise incentives within Pillar 2: High Quality and Diverse Teachers and Leaders. Senate Bill 545, simply codifies that the minimum salary for all public school employees will be \$60,000 by July 1, 2026. The proposed legislation also dictates the pay increases for specified certifications which reiterates the mandates of the Blueprint. Finally, this bill incentivizes skilled teachers to dedicate their expertise where it is most needed by offering additional compensation for educators working in low performing schools.

Strong Schools Maryland stands in strong support of Senate Bill 545, as it takes a significant step in fulfilling the mandates of the Blueprint by establishing the minimum salary for public school teachers and equitably incentivizing educators within the profession.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 545.

For more information, contact Kenzie Funk at kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org

¹ [Minimum and Maximum Salaries for Maryland Public School Teachers](#)

² [Maryland's Teacher Workforce: Supply, Demand, and Diversity](#)

SB 545 - Kimberly Carr MacDonald.pdf

Uploaded by: Kim MacDonald

Position: FAV

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,

Kimberly Carr MacDonald, MA, NCC, NBCT
National Board Certified Teacher – School Counseling
Northern High School
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Owings, MD 20736
(443) 550-8942 direct line
(443) 550-8950 main office

SB545_FAV_MSHA.pdf

Uploaded by: Lisa Smith

Position: FAV



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

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Speech Language Hearing Association (MSHA) represents speech language pathologists (SLPs) and audiologists in Maryland. MSHA's mission is to elevate and engage its members and strive for excellence in serving those impacted by communication and related disorders, through advocacy, equity, education, interprofessional collaboration, and leadership development.

MSHA strongly supports salary supplements for audiologists and SLPs who possess the ASHA Certificate of Clinical Competence. The Certificate is a "high-quality educator" credential, qualifying these professionals for a minimum salary and a salary increase.

Just like our special education teacher colleagues, SLPs provide direct specialized instruction to students with disabilities. We are responsible exclusively for Individualized Education Program (IEP) communication goals. Audiologists provide a key related service required for students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing to access school.

Unlike special education teachers, we are not eligible for National Board Teaching Certification, which is the trigger mechanism for salary supplements in the Maryland Blueprint for Education passed by the General Assembly. Therefore, 1,374 SLPs and 22 audiologists in Maryland schools will be excluded from a critical recruitment and retention tool that is desperately needed to best serve Maryland children with disabilities.

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) reports that speech language pathology is currently the third biggest staff shortage area in Maryland schools, with only special educators and general elementary educators in greater demand.¹ This causes significant harm to Maryland students and financial damage to school districts.

¹ MSDE, Maryland's Teacher Workforce: Supply, Demand, and Diversity, 2022.

When students miss speech therapy or audiology services due to staffing shortages, children's developmental and language delays are extended and intensified. Behavior issues develop when students are frustrated and cannot communicate. Elementary students cannot build strong reading, writing, and spelling skills on a poor foundation of language. Older students with disabilities need functional communication skills to transition to the workplace or to maximize their independence.

Despite school districts lacking adequate professional staff, the legal obligations to provide speech therapy and audiology to students with disabilities remain. As a result, school systems contract for expensive virtual services for in-person students, pay out Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) compensatory awards for missed services, or agree to expensive private special education school placements due to our failure to provide the required services. On average, it costs local schools about \$40,000 per year to contract out for one SLP versus hiring and retaining a full-time SLP. By passing this salary supplement and hiring SLPs who will be present at the schools and reside in Maryland, local school jurisdictions will save millions of tax-payer dollars.

By granting SLPs and audiologists the salary supplement, we can reduce the fiscal note by millions more statewide. We are unique in this fiscal and educational benefit to the state.

Contractual staffing companies charge between approximately \$550 and \$750 per day for each SLP. Anne Arundel, Prince George's, Baltimore County, Montgomery County, and others have had to resort to contractual virtual services for in-person students, in addition to in-person contractors. They pay for the virtual SLP and paraeducators to sit with students as they Zoom from their classrooms.

MSDE State Complaint Letters of Finding show that families are furious that their children are not receiving speech therapy or being forced to receive virtual services while attending in person due to lack of staff (Compliant # [23-167](#), [23-267](#), [23-239](#), [23-240](#), [23-242](#), [23-272](#), [23-210](#), [23-192](#), [22-080](#), [22-098](#), [22-101](#), [22-097](#), [22-119](#), [22-069](#), [22-045](#), [22-060](#), [22-074](#), [22-123](#)).

If speech therapy services are missed, IEP Teams are required to address it at the next IEP Meeting. School districts provide FAPE Compensatory Awards, or payments to provide the services that were missed. This can easily amount to \$2000 per student. Some families unilaterally enroll their child in a private special education school when the public school misses services, delays assessment, or fails to hold an IEP Meeting because of lack of staff. A year at Gateway, a private school for children with communication disorders, costs approximately \$150,000 per student. Other private special education placements cost much more. If a family disagrees with a speech therapy assessment that was conducted virtually, they can demand an Independent Education Evaluation (IEE), which costs between \$800 and \$1200.

SLPs and audiologists are unique educators in the Maryland public schools because we are required to hold a Maryland Department of Health license. School districts bill Medicaid for every

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therapy session and assessment we conduct. We help bring in federal revenue. **The average speech-language pathologist will bring in \$52,000 in Medicaid revenue per year when providing services to Medicaid-eligible students.**

We urge Maryland to include SLPs and audiologists in the salary supplement framework within our public schools. We are spending millions of dollars beyond what it would cost to simply adequately recruit and staff these positions.

Many states and cities across the U.S. provide salary supplements to teachers who hold a National Board Teaching Certificate (NBTC). Faced with their own shortages of SLPs and audiologists, these jurisdictions have elected to provide the same salary supplements to SLPs and audiologists who hold the American Speech Hearing Language Association's Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech Language Pathology or Audiology (ASHA CCC-SLP/A). This advanced national credential consists of the same components as NBTC and is more rigorous given the higher education requirement for entry into the profession and continuing education for maintaining the credential.

For example, Kentucky, Indiana, Page United School District in Arizona, and Papillion-LaVista School District in Nebraska give salary supplements to teachers with NBTC and SLPs and audiologists with CCC-SLP/A. Frederick County Public Schools (Maryland) agreed to provide salary supplements to teachers with NBTC or speech-language pathologists with CCC-SLP through the union contract.

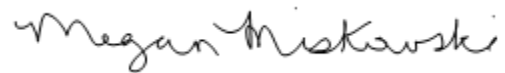
The demand for SLPs and audiologists is rising in educational and medical settings. For SLPs, the projected job growth is at 21% through 2031 and 10.6% for audiologists through 2032 per the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. In 2018, more than half (54%) of ASHA Schools Survey respondents reported that job openings for SLPs exceeded job seekers in their employment facility and geographic area. This legislation will help Maryland stay competitive in the job market and make our public schools an attractive place to work for transplants and new graduates.

Given the dire situation, many districts offer straight incentives for speech-language pathologists and audiologists who work in public schools and hold CCC-SLP even if they do not award salary supplements for NBTC. Mississippi, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Nevada, West Virginia, Rhode Island, Delaware, Michigan, North Carolina, multiple school districts in California, and Chesterfield School District, VA all provide salary supplements to those who work in public schools and hold the advance national CCC credential. CCC-SLP/A is a high-quality certification, and additional fiscal recruitment tools are desperately needed in Maryland.

I would refer the Committee to the chart at the end of my testimony comparing NBTC requirements to ASHA CCC-SLP/A. A fair reading of the requirements will show that SLPs and audiologists have equivalent and even stricter requirements than teachers to be awarded national certification and to retain it after the award. These clinicians hold advanced certification and maintain a high level of continuing education. This is the quality of care that children with disabilities in Maryland deserve.

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Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Megan Miskowski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

Megan Miskowski, M.S., CCC-SLP

Director of Advocacy and Public Policy

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Comparing the Professions		
	Teacher	Speech-Language Pathologist/ Audiologist
Education Requirement	Bachelor's Degree	Master's or Doctor's Degree
Alternate Career Entry Option (Teach for America, etc.)?	Yes	No
Required Credential	Maryland State Teaching Certificate	Maryland Department of Health License
Continuing Education Requirement for Mandatory Credential	6 Continuing Professional Development credits every 5 years	30 Continuing Education Units every 24 months
Provides direct instruction?	Yes	Yes – per section 300.39 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) speech therapy is considered both a related service and specialized instruction; audiology is a related service
Primarily responsible and accountable for teaching the students	Yes	Yes – just like special education teachers, speech-language pathologists and audiologists are responsible and accountable for our students Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals
Comparing the Advanced Credential for National Certification		
	National Board Teaching Certificate (NBTC)	American Speech Language Hearing Association Certificate of Clinical Competence (ASHA CCC-SLP/A)
Exam	National Teachers' Exam	National Speech-Language Pathology or Audiology exam
Peer-Review	Portfolio Review - Video of teaching - Written essays describing teaching	<u>Speech Language Pathologists</u> Clinical Fellowship Skills Inventory - 18 hours of direct observation and 18 hours of indirection observation (review of written work products, etc.) - Review of 21 clinical skills by a fully licensed and certificated speech language pathologist or audiologists <u>Audiologists</u> 2020 Standards for Clinical Certification in Audiology 12 months of fulltime supervised practice with skills competency checks and feedback
Eligibility	3 years teaching	SLP – master's degree (2 years) and completed fellowship (1 year); Audiologist – Doctors Degree (3-4 years)
Maintenance	Complete Maintenance of Certification every 5 years - portfolio submission of two components that are evaluated together and scored holistically.	Complete 30 professional development hours (PDHs) every 3 years. Must include at least 2 hours in cultural competency, cultural humility, culturally responsive practice, or diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and 1 hour in ethics.

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2024 MOTA SB 545 Senate Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael Paddy

Position: FAV



Maryland Occupational Therapy Association

PO Box 36401, Towson, Maryland 21286 ♦ www.mota-members.com

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

The Maryland Occupational Therapy Association (MOTA) supports *Senate Bill 545 – Primary and Secondary Education - Public School Employees - Salaries*. This bill addresses would provide salary increases for certain school personnel, which would help address ongoing shortages in school-based health providers.

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future, recognized the importance of addressing teacher shortages and ensuring that all students have access to highly qualified teachers. To help the state achieve these goals the Blueprint created the “Career Ladder for Educators.” This program created a minimum teacher salary and created a tiered salary system to incentivize educators to achieve advanced education and credentials. MOTA strongly supported the Blueprint, including the teacher career ladder. However, we believe that there should be an extension to the Blueprint to help address shortages of school health providers.

Occupational therapists (OTs) and occupational therapy assistants (OTAs) provide important services to students that help ensure that all students are able to receive a high-quality education. Similar to how OTs and OTAs work with patients to address barriers to completing activities of daily living, we help many students address barriers to classroom participation and completing classroom activities. Without OTs and OTAs many students would not be able to be educated even with the most highly qualified educators. Currently, school systems are having difficulty hiring and retaining OTs and OTAs because the salaries in our school system are not keeping up with salaries in private practice or other healthcare settings. This legislation would help attract and retain high quality OTs and OTAs so that all Maryland students are able to access a high-quality education.

Thank you for your attention to this important bill. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

Edited Copy of SB 0545 Dr. Ham testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Nikki Ham

Position: FAV

Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

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

Hearing Date: February 28, 2024

Position: Support

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

I am an assistant professor of counseling at the first HBCU in Maryland, Bowie State University, and I stand before you today to express unwavering support for Senate Bill 545. This bill highlights the progress for primary and secondary education, with a particular focus on enhancing the recruitment and retention of school counselors, a vital component of our educational system.

The Maryland School Counselor Association has already pointed out that SB 545 paves the way for necessary reforms in acknowledging that competitive salary increases are crucial for attracting and retaining school counselors. This legislation seeks to extend eligibility for salary enhancements, currently exclusive to nationally board-certified teachers (NBCTs), to include additional highly qualified educators, such as school counselors. This adjustment is not merely administrative, it is a recognition of the important role that school counselors play in the educational and personal development of our students.

School counselors are on the front lines, addressing the academic, career, and emotional needs of students. They are pivotal in creating environments where students can thrive academically and personally. The challenges of today's educational landscapes, including increased academic pressures, social and emotional challenges, and the need for college and career readiness, underscore the critical role of school counselors. Their expertise not only supports students in overcoming barriers to success but also fosters a school culture that promotes wellness and inclusivity.

The importance of recruiting and retaining highly qualified school counselors cannot be overstated. I see this first hand as a professor in the school counseling program. We have seen a reduction in the applicants to become school counselors, this will have a direct impact on the school counselors in the pipeline to be hired in our local school systems. With the ongoing challenges in education the role of school counselors has become even more vital. They are essential in supporting students' mental health, providing crisis intervention, and ensuring students remain engaged and motivated in their educational journeys. The proposed legislation acknowledges this by aligning the treatment of school counselors with that of their teaching colleagues regarding salary increases. This is a step in the right direction recognizing the value of all educators and ensuring that schools can attract and retain the best professionals.

In conclusion, Senate Bill 545 is an important piece of legislation that recognizes the essential role of school counselors in our educational system. This is also on par with other states that have similar legislation to support salary increases for school personnel. By expanding eligibility for salary increases to include these key professionals, we not only acknowledge their value but also take a significant step towards ensuring that our schools are staffed with dedicated, highly qualified counselors who can make a profound difference in the lives of students. I urge you to support this bill, affirming our collective commitment to the well-being and success of all students.

Thank you for considering my testimony on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Dr. Nikki Ham
Assistant Professor
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Prince George's County

SB545_MSEA_Zwerling_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Samantha Zwerling

Position: FAV

FAVORABLE
Senate Bill 545
Primary and Secondary Education – Public School Employees – Salaries

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
February 28, 2024

Samantha Zwerling
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association strongly supports Senate Bill 545, which seeks to take targeted steps aimed at improving the educator shortages that are impacting school systems and job types across the state. This bill is one of MSEA's top 2024 legislative priorities to help address the educator shortage and excessive workloads.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

MSEA is excited to continue to partner with legislative leaders to build on the legislature's strong record of commitment to our public schools with policies to meet this moment and ensure that no Marylanders are left behind. Educators are focused on helping students excel after the pandemic, yet are doing so in the face of excessive workload issues which are exacerbated by staffing shortages in every school building.

The staffing shortage affects the academic achievement, emotional wellness, and safety of our students. Students and families are faced with more trauma, unaddressed social emotional needs, societal divisiveness, and high levels of stress. These have contributed to more disciplinary issues that too often lead to violence between students and sometimes against staff members. To provide additional student support, targeted interventions, trainings, and restorative practices, our schools need more qualified mental health professionals and support staff. Schools must be the safe and supportive learning and teaching environments they are meant to be, and that students, educators, and families deserve. House Bill 789 takes limited but strategic reforms to better recruit and retain the outstanding educators that all students and schools deserve and depend on.

The bill would expand eligibility for all salary increases that are currently limited to Nationally Board Certified (NBC) teachers to additional highly qualified educators.

There are many teachers, who are not directly the teacher of record, who have National Board Certifications but are currently not eligible for the state portion of the salary increases (\$10,000 for NBC and \$7,000 more for teaching in an identified low-performing school). This bill would expand eligibility for these increases to those teaching in critical shortage areas like reading and math specialists, school counselors, literacy interventionists, gifted and talented specialists, and more who are just as important to the daily instruction and success for students as the classroom teacher/teacher of record. Leveling the playing field is important to making sure that highly qualified educators in these roles stay in them rather than move to NBC-eligible roles and exacerbate shortages in non-NBC-eligible roles. They've earned the national certifications, they work directly with students daily, and they should not be left out of the salary enhancement.

The bill would expand eligibility for these salary increases to behavioral health and other school-based student service providers who obtain highly regarded national accreditation in their profession.

School psychologists, speech pathologists, and others who work directly with students are not eligible for National Board Certification but have the ability to gain national certification from other accreditation bodies. Under the bill, the Maryland State Board of Education and the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board would vet and determine what the appropriate and applicable accreditations are in each job type. Educators in these fields face often staggering caseloads and shrinking pipelines to fill these critical positions, underscoring the importance of our efforts to recruit and retain them through simple changes like this bill proposes. This would also incentivize our most experienced professionals to stay and serve students and mentor colleagues who are earlier in their careers. Again, they've earned the top accreditation it's just not under the National Board because National Board doesn't offer it for their subject area.

~~The bill would remove unworkable language concerning the career ladder requirement that assistant principals spend 20% of their time as a teacher of record and the remainder of their time engaged in other teaching activities.~~

~~Schools need assistant principals to address student discipline, lead special education team meetings, serve as observers in the evaluation system, and support good teaching and strong professional growth systems. They also handle emergencies that can occur throughout the day with no warning. The current statute precludes such duties being assigned to an assistant principal on the career ladder. Adding teaching duties to already overworked assistant principals while preventing them from carrying out key functions of their job is a recipe for increasing rather than addressing shortages among these important educators. This change will encourage assistant principals to take part in classroom instruction~~



through co-teaching, model teaching, substituting, but won't require them to be the teacher of record.

The bill would remove limitations on who can write curriculum and assessments for content areas in a district. Currently, the statute only permits distinguished and professor distinguished teachers to be selected to write curriculum and assessment items and to develop model lessons. Given how few educators would find themselves on these rungs of the career ladder due to its relatively recent introduction, this language is not workable. If the current statute is maintained, it would lead to severely overburdening a small number of educators and burning them out extremely quickly. It could also result in a delay in curriculum and assessment creation and delivery.

MSEA strongly urges a favorable report of Senate Bill 545.

SB 545 Elfreth Testimony.docx (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Elfreth

Position: FAV

SENATOR SARAH ELFRETH
Legislative District 30
Anne Arundel County



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Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Capital Budget

Pensions

Chair, Public Safety,
Transportation, and Environment

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area

Chair, Joint Subcommittee on
Program Open Space/Agricultural
Land Preservation

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 28, 2024

Testimony in Favor of SB 545
Primary and Secondary Education - Public School Employees - Salaries

Chairman Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 545 to implement targeted reforms and funding solutions to address the educator shortage impacting every jurisdiction across the State.

As this Committee well knows, Maryland is experiencing a significant educator shortage. This is not for lack of qualified and passionate educators and service providers - these professionals can simply be paid more for their expertise in other fields. As a result of the consequent vacancies, additional strain is placed on the shoulders of educators who are already past their limit as they take on the countless roles already expected of them. Service provider roles are sometimes contracted out, which results in high-turnover and disrupted continuity of services in communities that need stable support the most. Many of these contracted positions are currently paid for by Federal American Rescue Plan funding, which reaches its sunset this year and will result in the sudden loss of critical specialist positions. The chaos that results from the vacancies, high turnover, and reliance on one-time Federal funding is unsustainable and a disservice to students, educators, families, and school communities. With the passage of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future in 2021, the General Assembly made a commitment to providing the school communities of Maryland the absolute best education system available. Senate Bill 545 is a critical step toward fulfilling that promise.

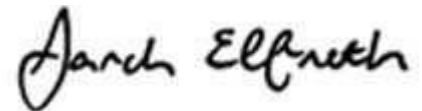
SB 545 will expand eligibility for salary increases that are currently limited to Nationally Board Certified (NBC) teachers to additional highly qualified educators. There are many teachers - who are not directly the teacher of record - who have National Board Certifications but are currently not eligible for the state portion of the salary increases (\$10,000 for NBC and \$7,000 more for teaching in an identified low-performing school). SB 545 would expand eligibility for these increases to those teaching in critical shortage areas like reading and math specialists, department heads, school counselors, literacy interventionists, gifted and talented specialists, and more who are just as important to the daily instruction and success for students as the classroom teacher/teacher of record. Leveling the playing field is important to ensuring that highly qualified educators in these roles remain in our public schools. They have earned the national certifications, they work directly with students daily, and they should not be left out of the salary enhancement.

SB 545 will expand eligibility for these salary increases to behavioral health and other school-based student service providers who obtain highly regarded national accreditation in their profession. School psychologists, speech pathologists, social workers, and others who work directly with students are not eligible for National Board Certification but have the ability to gain national certification from equally prestigious accreditation bodies. Under the Bill, the Maryland State Board of Education and the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board would vet and determine what the appropriate and applicable accreditations are in each job type. Educators in these fields often face staggering caseloads and shrinking pipelines to fill these critical positions, underscoring the importance of our efforts to recruit and retain them through simple changes like this Bill proposes. This would also incentivize our most experienced professionals to stay and serve students and mentor colleagues who are earlier in their careers. Again, they have earned the top accreditation but are not eligible for bonuses under Blueprint.

In order to recruit and retain the absolute best educators and school-based service providers in Maryland, we must ensure that salaries and incentives align with the expertise and level of professional achievement for all school specialties. SB 545 puts the promise of the Blueprint into practice to deliver the absolute best and brightest educators to Maryland school communities.

I urge a favorable report on SB 545.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Elfreth". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Sarah Elfreth
District 30

Sue Young_SB 545_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Sue Young

Position: FAV

Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

Bill Number: Senate Bill 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 the Environment Committee,

My name is Mrs Sue Young and I serve Belvedere Elementary in Anne Arundel County as their school counselor. I am writing in support of Senate Bill 545, which is needed to clarify and rectify inconsistencies that are currently occurring between various local counties and acknowledgement that salary increases are needed to recruit and retain school counselors.

Last Fall, I received an email from AACPS HR stating that I would no longer qualify after this year for any stipend or salary enhancement, even while I have attained the highest level of certifications available for my area of expertise - school counseling – with 3 different certifications. I currently hold national certifications to support both the preventative/teaching side of my role (NBCT) and the responsive counseling side of my role (NBCC and NCSC). Each of these certifications requires that I renew every 5 years to maintain additional education and learn updated information to maintain the highest level of school counseling services for my students.

There is 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.**

NBCT school counselors have undergone the same rigorous process as NBCT classroom teachers to attain this highly challenging level of recognition in their field. To attain this, we must be able to recognize student needs, develop specific interventions to address those needs and demonstrate data driven evidence of the direct impact to students based on those interventions.

School counselors are the ONLY mental health professionals who are eligible for NBCT. This is because school counselors are the ONLY mental health providers in our schools that provide mental health services to EVERY student in our buildings. We provide preventative services through classroom lessons and small group counseling. We also provide responsive services through individual and small group counseling. Both types of services are needed to address the mental health needs of our students. Before students can be ready to be successful academically, mental health needs to be addressed first to ensure the overall success of our Maryland students.

In addition, school counselors teach other lessons to all students on their caseloads throughout the year related to coping strategies, communication, managing emotions effectively, navigating peer conflict with active listening to resolve conflict, academic success strategies, as well as goal setting and college and career support. Our curriculum focuses on three domains - personal/social, academic and college/career.

We teach through classroom and small group instruction and this is why we are the ONLY mental health providers in schools that are eligible for NBCT certification.

Currently I am teaching lessons (in 25 different classrooms) to every student in my building as it relates to Erin's Law - a Maryland Law requiring lessons on personal safety to prevent childhood sexual abuse. In the fall, I taught prevention lessons related to the Start Talking MD law teaching lessons on drug abuse prevention/opioid education. This month, I am also working with 5th grade students to prepare and learn about their options as they transition to Middle School. In March, I will start my lessons at every grade level to teach students online safety.

With the passing of Senate Bill 545, this inequity and inconsistency between county jurisdictions that currently exists between NBCTs will be corrected at the state level and will be in alignment with the AIB's acknowledgement that school counselors should be included in the career ladder opportunities afforded to professionals who attain NBCT. **I ask for a favorable Committee report on Senate Bill 545.** Please feel free to contact me with any questions or additional information you need.

Sincerely,

Mrs Priscilla Sue Young, M. Ed., NBCT, NBCC, NCSC

Belvedere Elementary School Counselor / psyoun@aacps.org

NBCT: National Board Certified Teacher/ School Counseling : since 2020

NBCC: National Board Certified Counselor : since 1998

NCSC: National Board Certified School Counselor / Speciality Area: since 2016

Literacy Teacher,SB0545.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Boswell

Position: FWA

My name is Jennifer Boswell, and I am a Literacy Teacher in Anne Arundel County who has the high honor of having earned National Board Certification. I am reaching out to you to share my experience with the discrepancy in the definition of teacher as stated in the Blueprint. In my position, I co-teach in classrooms, model lessons over a single day or many days, teach interventions, assess students for the varied county and state assessments along with those required by the Ready to Read Act, and many other roles. I am National Board Certified Teacher in Elementary Reading Language Arts. Having earned this distinguished title demonstrates that not only am I a reflective practitioner, but also an expert in literacy. I use my knowledge and expertise daily with students, staff, and my administrator.

Combined with the role of Literacy Teacher, I am the School Testing Coordinator. I fill this position with my Literacy Teacher role, because my school doesn't have an Assistant Principal. In this role I work with Special Educators, teachers, students, and staff to ensure our students are assessed in a manner concurrent with state law. As stated in COMAR under .04 Local School System Testing Designates:

- (d) Eligible STCs include the following:
 - (i) State-certified teachers; and
 - (ii) State-certified guidance counselors, library media specialists, school psychologists, pupil personnel workers, and school administrators (other than the Principal).

As you see, according to COMAR I am considered a "teacher", but according to Blueprint I am not. The issue arises when, due to Blueprint, I am not considered a "teacher" and therefore not considered a candidate for the \$10,000 salary enhancement.

I have used my expertise to work with students even when I was very ill. I am a two-year breast cancer survivor. Throughout my various chemotherapy and radiation treatments, I worked tirelessly to fulfill all of my various duties. I did this because I understand how important it is to have someone in my position with the National Board certification in Literacy. I know that without the revision to the list of teachers who receive the enhancements, more experts in literacy will leave the position I currently hold. They may go into the classroom, which is wonderful and a place I love. This will strongly impact 25 – 30 students, but in my position I have an impact on 300 students. I hope you see the power in that.

I reach out to you to consider amending the Blueprint to consider someone in my position – that of a Literacy Teacher. Literacy Teachers across the state are

needed and with us not being included to receive the enhancement many will leave the role. Yesterday, at the Maryland State Board of Education, the National Board spoke to the importance of the Science of Reading and how the standards for National Boards will change to reflect the Science of Reading. Shouldn't someone who specializes in Literacy lead that charge?

Maryland is a great place to live and work. I know you strive everyday to work for equity. This inequity in who is granted the salary enhancement does not seem in line with Maryland's hard work for all.

SB 545.Public School Employees - Non-Teacher Educa

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: FWA

BILL: Senate Bill 545
TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education – Public School Employees – Salaries
DATE: February 28, 2024
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and Environment; Budget and Taxation
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports Senate Bill 545 toward the goal of including non-classroom teachers and other educators and education professionals within the scope of the significant salary increases and guaranteed minimum salaries provided by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

MABE has consistently supported efforts by the General Assembly to assist local school systems in addressing the critical shortages of not only highly qualified teachers but also other highly valued staff in every school across the State. At this time, Maryland is experiencing critical shortages across all of the educational and related services professional fields; a critical shortage of the staff needed to deliver and support student learning and to administer schools as educational leaders.

The pandemic heightened public awareness regarding the severity of scope of the mental and behavioral health needs of students, and the lack of adequate professional staff to meet these needs. MABE therefore supports the intent of Senate Bill 545 to include these staff in the benefits of the Blueprint. In this way, the Blueprint can be even more effective to recruit high school and college students to pursue degrees in fields such as school counseling, school psychology, and school social work. In addition, educators providing direct services to students, but not as classroom teachers, can be compensated based on their respective national certifications on par with their colleagues as they work side-by-side in schools. In this light, MABE urges consideration of future state investments in short and long-term solutions to providing the wide array of professional resources our students deserve. Senate Bill 545, if fully funded and given time to be incorporated in the Blueprint and state and local budgets, would contribute significantly to these ends.

Again, MABE firmly believes that the role of a full complement of qualified staff will be pivotal to the successful implementation of Blueprint for Maryland's Future and the highest benchmarks of student progress and success in attaining college and career readiness. However, the costs of expanding the scope of the Blueprint will be daunting and always competing for limited state and local revenues with other priorities such as expanding PreK.

All local boards of education value the essential role of each educator and staff person who work for the public school system as the key to educating and meeting the needs of our students. Unfortunately, Maryland continues to experience a major teacher shortage due to a number of factors including the low number of teacher candidates graduating from Maryland's universities, the number of potential teachers entering the profession, and the competitiveness of working condition and salaries. Again, MABE greatly appreciates that the Blueprint addresses these issues by mandating minimum salaries of \$60,000 for teachers, providing raises for teachers based on National Board Certification, and reducing the amount of time teachers are obligated to be in classrooms. However, the Blueprint inappropriately excludes many highly valued educators, essential to student success, from the salary increases and other provisions of the Blueprint.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 545, with an amendment to clarify that the bill is contingent on a commensurate increase in Blueprint funding, and the minimum starting salary would not become \$60,000 for all school employees, but for all certificated educators and staff providing instruction and related professional services to students in schools.

SB0545.pdf

Uploaded by: Lindsey Ells

Position: FWA

Dear Senators Elfreth, Gile, Jackson, Kramer, Lam, Salling, A. Washington, Hettleman, and M. Washington,

I'm writing this email to advocate for National Board pay increases for all National Board Certified teachers in our district, including Literacy Teachers and school counseling positions. We all strive to provide the best instruction and support for our students and should not be excluded from the funding.

I am a Literacy Teacher at an Annapolis area elementary school. I support and coach our teachers, lead collaborative planning and professional development sessions for our staff, and analyze data that directly impacts our students. In addition to this role, I also provide reading intervention for many of our students. This year I have five intervention groups and I help support a fourth-grade class with their reading block, along with helping classroom teachers and special education teachers implement their interventions. Whether teaching or modeling in another teacher's classroom or in a small group, I work directly with students for the majority of my day.

As the Literacy Teacher, I administer assessments, including DIBELS, for the Maryland Blueprint and the "Ready to Read" Senate Bill, as a *certified teacher*. I interpret and analyze this data with teachers and support them in providing the best instruction for ALL students. I communicate to families their children's scores and provide support on how to help at home.

Literacy Teachers work just as hard as any other classroom teachers or intervention teachers in the county. Whether it's stated explicitly in our job description or not, Literacy Teachers are the ones who are relied on to help our neediest students at schools who have no intervention position (and those that do!). We support all students directly and indirectly.

Last school year National Board Certified Literacy Teachers received a pay cut since our stipend for National Board certification expired. We continue in a position that we love and dedicate each day to helping students succeed in reading AND teachers succeed in teaching all students to read and write. Literacy Teachers deserve to be included in the pay increase. Please continue the fight for all National Board Certified teachers to receive the pay increase. We ALL deserve it.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Lindsey Ells

Lindsey Christian Ells
lrchristian@gmail.com

SB 545 - Primary and Secondary Education - Public

Uploaded by: Mary Pat Fannon

Position: FWA



PSSAM
Public School Superintendents' Association
OF MARYLAND

Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director
1217 S. Potomac Street
Baltimore, MD 21224
410-935-7281
marypat.fannon@pssam.org

BILL: SB 545

TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education - Public School Employees - Job Duties and Salaries

DATE: February 28, 2024

POSITION: Support with Amendments

COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **supports** Senate Bill 545 with amendments.

This bill generally aligns the salary requirements for certificated public school employees who are not eligible for salary increases under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future due to their subject matter not having a National Board Certification (NBC) standard by establishing an "alternative high-quality educator credential," as further specified in the bill. Initial potential salary increases take effect as early as fiscal 2025, subject to approval of the career ladder by the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) and approval of "alternative high-quality educator credentials." Further, by July 1, 2026 (fiscal 2027), the minimum salary for all certificated public school employees must be \$60,000.

PSSAM strongly supports this legislation's recognition of the important role all educators and staff play in the success of our students. We also support the salary increases for these additional employees who currently are not covered by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. While we greatly appreciate the funding limitations of the State and local governments to cover all employees under the Blueprint, the very public salary differentials have affected the harmony and ecosystems in school buildings. In addition, many systems have "me too" clauses that require similar salary increases and benefits among the bargaining units; however, these "other" units are not covered in the Blueprint, and we do not receive funding for them. This has put

pressure on our salary scales and may require a shift in how local school systems bargain future contracts.

Therefore, we can only support this legislation with an amendment to mandate the identical funding formula currently used for NBC teachers, as well as those included in the expanded group to receive the \$60,000 starting salary by July 1, 2026. Without these provisions, the bill poses an extraordinary unfunded mandate on school systems and their local government funding partners.

Again, we support all State efforts to attract and retain teachers and staff. We also value the respective national certifications and education attainments by every public school employee and hope that future State and local funding can be identified to provide the highest compensation possible for all school employees.

For these reasons, PSSAM **supports** Senate Bill 545 with an amendment to mandate State funding and requests a **favorable amendment report**.

2024 MNA and MASHN SB 545 Senate Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FWA



Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

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

Hearing Date: February 28, 2024

Position: Support with Amendments

The Maryland Nurses Association (MNA) and the Maryland Association of School Health Nurses (MASHN) strongly support *Senate Bill 545 – Primary and Secondary Education - Public School Employees - Salaries*. The bill would create a pathway for salary increases for school nurses and other school health staff. This legislation embodies a critical strategy to recruit and retain nurses during a severe nursing shortage. We would request one technical amendment.

More School Nurses Needed in Maryland

The National Association of School Nurses has stated that “access to a school nurse all day, every day can improve students’ health, safety, and educational achievement.”ⁱ Maryland falls short of this goal with an average of 0.74 registered nurses for every school, according to data from the Maryland State Department of Education (see attached). There are wide gaps in access to school nursing. The following jurisdictions have less than the average school nurses per school: Anne Arundel (0.62), Baltimore City (0.30), Calvert (0.72), Frederick (0.38), Garret (no RNs in the school system), Kent (0.40), Montgomery (0.57), Somerset (0.67), and Washington (0.36).

Maryland needs just under 400 more nurses to reach the goal of a full-time nurse in every school. The number may be higher if we take into account that more than one nurse may be needed for larger schools.

Why Every School Needs a Nurse

Maryland needs a nurse in every school because students' health needs have become more complex. As we have seen as students return to in-person classes in recent months, students have layers of unmet health needs that impede their ability to learn and integrate into the classroom.

School nurses are essential to support:

- **Students with complex medical needs.** Children with complex needs are those with chronic, severe health conditions, major functional limitations, and substantial health service needsⁱⁱ School nurses are essential in ensuring these students can remain in school;
- **Students with increasing behavioral health needs.** Children and adolescents are facing a mental health crises. Youth suicide deaths have already been on the increase in Maryland. Between 2007 and 2018, youth suicide deaths rose by 21%. Now in the aftermath of the pandemic, children and adolescents are facing even greater risks. Leading health care organizations have declared a "National Emergency in Child and Adolescent Mental Health."ⁱⁱⁱ

Maryland is planning to make significant investments in behavioral health in schools in recognition of the youth behavioral health crises. Yet implementation of new behavioral health programs will be challenging in schools without a full-time nurse. School nurses coordinate all somatic and behavioral health services provided to students.

- **Students with chronic diseases such as diabetes, asthma, and hypertension.** One-fourth of children have a chronic disease, and 5 % have multiple chronic conditions. The numbers of children with chronic conditions has been rising.^{iv} School nurses coordinate care with a student's primary care provider to manage student's chronic conditions and improve their health outcomes. School nurses administer treatments, including medication, to ensure students can remain in school.
- **Students in health emergencies.** It is estimated that 10-25% of emergencies for children occur while they are in school.^v School nurses are the key in managing those emergencies effectively.

How the Bill Would Help Address the School Nurse Shortage/Technical Amendment

Local jurisdictions are struggling to recruit and retain school nurses because of the broader nursing professional shortages. Health care programs and facilities generally have higher salaries, making it difficult for local jurisdictions to compete for nurses. The bill would help alleviate the salary gap for school nurses who meet the criteria as determined in the implementation of the bill.

We would suggest a technical amendment that school nurses may work for either the local education agency or the local health department.

On page 3 in line 7, insert "OR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT"

Conclusion

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

ⁱ <https://www.nasn.org/nasn-resources/professional-practice-documents/position-statements/ps-workload>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.childrenshospitals.org/issues-and-advocacy/children-with-medical-complexity/issue-briefs-and-reports/the-landscape-of-medical-care-for-children-with-medical-complexity>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/child-and-adolescent-healthy-mental-development/aap-aacap-cha-declaration-of-a-national-emergency-in-child-and-adolescent-mental-health/>

^{iv} <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5010981/#R41>

^v <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article-abstract/122/4/887/71309/Medical-Emergencies-Occurring-at-School?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

SB0545 Howard Co BOE Testimony 022824 for EEE B&T

Uploaded by: Staff Howard County

Position: FWA



Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate,
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Budget and Taxation Committee
February 28, 2024



Board of Education
of Howard County

SB0545: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Primary and Secondary Education - Public School Employees – Salaries

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **SB0545 Primary and Secondary Education - Public School Employees – Salaries** with amendments to guarantee adequate local and state funding.

Jennifer Swickard Mallo, *Chair*

Yun Lu, Ph.D., *Vice Chair*

Linfeng Chen, Ph.D.

Jacky McCoy

Jolene Mosley

Robyn C. Scates, Esq.

Antonia Watts

Lamia Ayaz
Student Member

William J. Barnes
*Acting Superintendent,
Secretary/Treasurer*

SB0545 adds identification of “qualified educators” defined as a public school employee who provides direct instruction or services to students in a public school. Furthermore, the bill defines “alternative high-quality educator credential” as a non-National Board Certification (NBC) or credential that is awarded to an educator for meeting high-quality standards on an assessment in a professional field or specialty that does not have NBC standards and that has been approved jointly by the Maryland State Board of Education (MSDE) and the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board (PSTEB). Qualified educators must be eligible for salary increases similar to those provided to teachers under the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future when obtaining an alternative high-quality educator credential and when working in a low-performing school. Beginning July 1, 2026, the minimum salary for all public school employees shall be \$60,000.

For purposes of understanding the impact and scope of SB0545, staff interprets the inclusion of existing Education Article § 6-401 at the opening of the bill as a means to further define “qualified educators” and the application of minimum salary, both of which reference public school employees. Education Article § 6-401 defines a “public school employee” as those who are certificated professional individuals employed by a public school employer, except for a county superintendent or an individual designated by the public school employer to act in a negotiating capacity.

As a measure aimed at elevating the importance of school employees not included in the definition and salary increases called for under the Blueprint, staff supports the intent of SB0545. Since its implementation in 2021, several categories of employees have pointed out the inconsistency in raising the minimum starting salary of teachers as well as offering increases in salary for working in low-performing schools and gaining NBC certification. These employees provide a different, yet valuable contribution to the Blueprint goal of improving the quality and equity of Maryland’s education system so that every Maryland student, regardless of where they live, family income, race, ethnicity, gender, language spoken at home, special needs, and any other unique characteristic, receives a world-class education that prepares them for success in college and career.

The [Fiscal and Policy note](#) indicates “MSDE advises there are currently 8,076 ‘qualified employees’ that may be eligible to receive one or more salary increases under the bill, which includes 1,082 pupil personnel and social workers, 2,153 therapists, 2,821 school

Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee & the Budget
and Taxation Committee
February 28, 2024

counselors, 859 psychological personnel, and 1,161 school librarians.” The local Howard County breakdown is as follows:

MSDE Position Code	Filled Positions
18 – Therapist	1
19 – Media Specialist	112
20 – School Counselor	202
21 - Psychologist	83
22 – Pupil Personnel Worker	24
23 – Social Worker	31

All of these positions in Howard County are currently above a \$60,000 minimum starting salary on the Howard County Education Association (HCEA) or HCEA-ESP scale. While staff cannot estimate an exact amount because the “alternative high-quality educator credential” qualifications are to be approved by MSDE and the PSTEB under the bill, up to 453 positions would be eligible to receive the \$10,000 initial salary increase if they qualify for an alternative credential, and for a \$7,000 increase if working at a low-performing school.

The Board supports legislation that includes sufficient and sustainable funding to provide appropriate instructional programming and operational services, including mandated programs and priorities under the Blueprint. Should the legislature decide to include compensation for qualified educators in the manner called for under SB0545/HB0789, adequate funding from both state and local authorities must also be met. While the addition of the definition should prompt additional state funding, as a county where local Maintenance of Effort (MOE) is above the local share of Foundation Aid, HCPSS may be faced with a continuous dilemma of requesting above MOE funding that may not be approved and/or cutting service levels in other areas of the budget to afford the unfunded increases. Guaranteed local funding to meet the intent of the bill is recommended by the Board.

With these amendments, we urge a FAVORABLE report of SB0545 from this Committee.