



Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair  
Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Vice Chair  
Ways and Means Committee  
Room 131 House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

February 26th, 2024

**Bill: House Bill - Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Use of Reimbursement Funds by Schools**

**Position: Support**

Dear : Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA) - which represents about 500 Maryland school psychologists - strongly supports House Bill 1317 Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Use of Reimbursement Funds by Schools. HB 1317 directs new money arising from school psychologists' coming Medicaid billing ability to measures addressing the school psychologist shortage. MSPA appreciates Maryland's delicate fiscal situation, so it applauds all ideas for novel funding sources addressing the crisis.

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 one 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. As a point of comparison, Massachusetts employs 1 school psychologist for every 686 students, and New York employs 1 school psychologist for every 629 students.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.

---

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

<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, teachers cite inadequate support for addressing those concerns as one of the primary drivers of decisions to leave their profession.<sup>4</sup> Thus, although the Assembly took commendable steps to attract new teachers through the Blueprint, the omission of similar efforts for attracting, training, and retaining school based mental health professionals threatens that goal. In all, Maryland’s children, families, and communities will continue to suffer.

MSPA therefore applauds all legislation drafted to address the ongoing shortage. As noted, HB 1317 directs new funds towards efforts undertaken to attract, train, and retain Maryland school psychologists. In light of the current delicate fiscal situation, MSPA welcomes such new ideas. Thank you for considering our comments on HB 1317. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us at [legislative@mSPAonline.org](mailto:legislative@mSPAonline.org) or Sarah Peters at [speters@hbstrategies.us](mailto:speters@hbstrategies.us) or 410-322-2320.

Respectfully submitted,

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

---

<sup>3</sup> 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/>

<sup>4</sup> 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](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1108-8.html)