



**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House of Delegates,
Ways and Means Committee
March 6, 2024**

**Board of Education
of Howard County**

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**HB1401: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS
State Department of Education - School Psychologist Recruitment Program**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **HB1401 State Department of Education - School Psychologist Recruitment Program** with amendments to ensure sufficient funding is provided to support the goals of the bill.

HB1401 establishes a School Psychologist Recruitment Program with the purpose of providing professional support to school psychologists in the state as well as individuals seeking to become one. Professional development opportunities may include virtual courses or webinars, mentoring or peer collaboration programs, and support materials.

Howard County Public School System's School Psychology staff indicate this bill has the potential to attract candidates from out-of-state who wish to work and live in Maryland. As social-emotional well-being of students continues to be a growing area of concern for school systems, the demand for certified professionals will also increase.

One area of concern with the bill, however, is the provision indicating financial support would come in the form of reimbursement for professional development services and National Association of School Psychologists credentialing subject to funding availability. In order to be a true draw for school psychologists, staff recommends the fees should be covered without the need to provide payment upfront and a guarantee of reimbursement.

Prior analysis by the Department of Legislative Services estimated if aid were provided to 100 individuals for initial certification under the National Association of School Psychologists at the nonmember/maximum rate of \$360, expenditures could increase by \$36,000. Another \$247,000 annually was estimated as necessary to reimburse school psychologists for attending conferences. Specific amendments to address guaranteed coverage of payment include striking "subject to funding availability" in line 7 on page 3 as well as "consistent with the amount provided in the State budget for the Program" in lines 17 through 18 on page 3, and instead requiring the Governor to annually allocate funds as estimated for the program.

With these amendments, we urge a FAVORABLE report of HB1401 from this Committee.