

Committee: House Ways and Means

Bill Number: HB 789 Primary and Secondary Education- Public School Employees - Salaries

Date: February 14, 2024

Position: Support

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Jacqueline Alyea and I am a School Counselor at Owings Mills High School in Owings Mills, Maryland. Maryland. I strongly support House Bill 789 Primary and Secondary Education - Public School Employees - Salaries. I am currently not a National Board Certified Counselor, but would get this certification to become nationally certified with this financial incentive.

As a school counselor, I have delivered lessons to 32 classes throughout this academic calendar. Additionally, I conduct two counseling groups to lessen equity gaps by addressing college and career readiness. Thus far this year I have had 946 student meetings and 53 parent meetings. I offer diverse avenues of direct assistance to students and collaborate with teachers, administrators and community partners to support students' needs.

It is imperative that we continue to focus on recruitment and retention of highly qualified counselors in the State of Maryland to aid in the mental health crisis our students face today. In our most recent department meeting, our data showed that counselors were only able to engage in socio-emotional counseling 9% of the time. With stretched caseloads the emphasis is on academic and college and career concerns, and we are not able to make as much progress as needed to address mental health concerns. The recruitment and retention of more highly qualified counselors could lessen caseloads and allow counselors to do more proactive mental health counseling.

Maryland students deserve the highest caliber of mental health educators. This bill would allow National Board Certified Counselors to be compensated for their above and beyond credentials at the same rate as teachers -- receiving an additional \$10,000 salary annually and another \$7,000 if they work in high needs schools like mine. I ask the Committee for a favorable committee report on House Bill 789.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Alyea, School Counselor

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