



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR TESTIMONY
Senate Bill 506
Maryland Medical Assistance Program –
Use of Reimbursement Funds by Schools.

Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce Senate Bill SB506 Maryland Medical Assistance Program- Use of Reimbursement Funds by Schools.

For the record, I am Senator Shaneka Henson from the 30th Legislative District of Anne Arundel County, MD.

As you will hear from testimony today, various healthcare providers bill Medicaid for a range of student services. These funds eventually flow back to the school districts for disbursement. We estimate that these funds are many millions across the state, and it is not clear how this money is currently used or if any flows back to the very departments that bill for the services.

This bill would direct reimbursement funds to initiatives aimed at bolstering the school healthcare workforce to provide students the services they are entitled to, including funding additional positions for providers, offering paid internships for students aspiring to enter healthcare professions, and providing stipends to address recruitment and retention challenges among providers.

As we all know, we face a continued shortage of school-based providers. Although school speech pathologists are among providers who bill the most, they continue to be the third largest staff shortage area in all Maryland schools, with only elementary teachers and special educators in greater demand. This shortage impacts the services our students receive.

Streamlining these funds to allowable uses around the providers is critical. So, why now?

Prioritizing wraparound services next to the implementation of Blueprint is critical; other states are prioritizing funds in a similar way; and we anticipate new and unaccounted dollars to flow back to the districts now that school psychologists are beginning to bill. This new and unaccounted for funding will help our students and help Maryland get closer to the nationally recommended ratio of one school psychologist to 500 students, instead of the current ratio in Maryland which is currently one school psychologist for every 1066 students. This ratio puts us behind other states including Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New Jersey. Directing these funds would help other provider groups in a similar way.

After conversations in the House, we would welcome an amendment to make certain that this bill is not intended to impact the Federally Qualified Health Centers. Secondly, in recognizing the funding concerns in the State, we would be ok with an amendment that would say “no less than a certain percentage of these funds shall flow back for the allowable uses prescribed in the bill.”

This legislation represents a significant opportunity to enhance healthcare access in Maryland schools and improve provider recruitment and retention. For these reasons, we request a favorable report.