

Education Advocacy Coalition

for Students with Disabilities

HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

House Bill 689: Maryland Medical Assistance Program—Use of Reimbursement Funds by Schools

Date: February 25, 2025

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities (EAC), a coalition of nearly 50 organizations and individuals concerned with education policy for students with disabilities in Maryland, is pleased to support House Bill 689, which mandates that funds reimbursed to school systems for the provision of services covered by the Maryland Medical Assistance Program or the Maryland Children's Health insurance program be used to increase the number of providers, including through hiring, paid internships, and stipends.

Currently, school systems, the payors of last resort for the special education and related services they provide to students, are permitted to bill Maryland Medical Assistance for services they provide to students that can be considered medical in nature. When school systems recoup funds through this third-party reimbursement process, they are not required to spend the funds within the program that generated the billing. By directing that reimbursed funds be used to hire, recruit and retain providers, House Bill 689 recognizes the pressing staff shortages that have caused many students, particularly students with disabilities, to go unserved, be served by providers who lack certification, or be served by contract virtual providers.

Although parents and guardians have the right to refuse to consent to allow Medicaid to be tapped for reimbursement of their child's services and should, in fact, refuse if using Medicaid benefits for school services would otherwise reduce the child's access to services outside of school, many school systems can potentially recoup millions of dollars each year through third party reimbursement. House Bill 689 could, therefore, make a significant difference in the ability of a school system to hire and retain providers by requiring reimbursed funds to be used for this purpose.

For these reasons, the EAC supports House Bill 689.

For more information or if questions, please contact: Leslie Seid Margolis, Co-Chairperson, at lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org or 443-692-2505.

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Respectfully submitted,

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The Maryland Education Coalition also joins this testimony.