

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2026 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

House Bill 740 (Delegate Stinnett, *et al.*)  
Ways and Means and Health

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**Public Schools - School-Based Mental Health Services - Full-Time Therapist**

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This bill requires each public school in the State to employ a full-time therapist that provides school-based mental health services to students during the instructional day. The therapist must be licensed and certified by the State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** State general fund expenditures increase beginning in FY 2027 to the extent the two State-run public schools (the SEED School of Maryland and the Maryland School for the Deaf) are not in compliance with the bill. Revenues are not affected.

**Local Effect:** Local school system expenditures increase significantly beginning in FY 2027 to hire a full-time therapist at each public school, as discussed below. Local revenues are not affected. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** The State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists licenses and certifies professional counselors, alcohol and drug counselors, marriage and family therapists, professional art therapists, and behavior analysts; receives and resolves complaints; and sets standards for the practice of counseling and therapy.

With the assistance of the local health department (LHD), each local board of education must provide adequate school health services, instruction in health education, and a healthful school environment. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) must jointly develop public standards and guidelines for school health programs and assist local boards of education and LHDs in their implementation.

Chapter 36 of 2020, The Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Blueprint) established the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports within the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission. The consortium must complete certain tasks related to the development of coordinated community supports partnerships to meet student behavioral health needs and other related challenges in a holistic, nonstigmatized, and coordinated manner, including developing a statewide framework for the creation of a coordinated community supports partnership, implementing a related grant program, evaluating a payment reimbursement program for providers, and developing a program for uninsured students. In addition, in consultation with MSDE, the consortium must develop best practices for the creation of a positive classroom for all students. The Blueprint also expanded funding for school-based health centers and for local school systems to train school staff to recognize student behavioral health issues and required local boards of education to enhance and expand the availability of behavioral health services to students.

### *School-based Health Centers*

School-based health centers (SBHCs) are health centers located in a school or on a school campus that provide on-site comprehensive preventive and primary health services. Services may also include behavioral health, oral health, ancillary, and supportive services. According to MDH's fiscal 2024 [School-based Health Centers Report](#), for the 2023-2024 school year, there were 89 SBHCs operating across 16 local jurisdictions.

### *School Therapists*

MSDE advises that the agency collects staffing information on some school health and wellness personnel through the Maryland Report Card. Additionally, MSDE's [Staff and Student Publications](#) provide some detail on the types of health and wellness personnel employed in public schools, including therapists.

**State Expenditures:** General fund expenditures increase beginning in fiscal 2027 to the extent that the two State-run public schools (the SEED School of Maryland and the Maryland School for the Deaf) do not currently retain a full-time therapist licensed and certified by the State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists to provide school-based mental health services during the instructional day.

MSDE advises that, to implement the bill, the department requires a full-time education program specialist to implement guidelines and standards for integrating full-time therapists into public schools, managing data collection and reporting systems, providing professional development, and coordinating with MDH and the State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists. This position would increase MSDE general fund expenditures by \$99,736 in fiscal 2027, increasing to \$134,830 in fiscal 2031. The Department of Legislative Services advises that the bill does not require any statewide coordination or oversight of therapists in public schools.

**Local Expenditures:** Local school system expenditures increase significantly to the extent public schools currently do not retain a full-time therapist (with the appropriate licensure and certification) to provide school-based mental health services to students during the instructional day. MSDE's [Staff and Student Publications](#) identify 2,233 therapists working in Maryland public schools as of October 2025. However, many of these therapists may currently perform duties other than working full-time to provide school-based mental health services during the instructional day.

Anne Arundel County Public Schools advises that it employs some social workers licensed by the State Board of Social Work Examiners to provide school-based mental health services. Many of these social workers split their days across multiple schools. The bill's requirement for a full-time therapist licensed and certified by the State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists at each school would therefore require the school system to hire an additional 55 licensed therapists at a cost of up to \$7.0 million annually beginning fiscal 2027.

St. Mary's County Public Schools advises that it employs three licensed therapists. Assuming that these therapists provide full-time school-based mental health services, costs increase for the school system to hire an additional 25 licensed therapists at a cost of approximately \$2.9 million in fiscal 2027.

Frederick County Public Schools similarly advises that the cost to hire one full-time licensed therapist at each of its public schools could cost \$10.0 million annually.

Wicomico County Public Schools advises that its existing school counselors and social workers are generally licensed through MSDE, not necessarily the State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists. Thus, the bill would necessitate significant additional expenditures to hire therapists to provide coverage at all schools.

## **Additional Information**

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Health; Maryland Association of County Health Officers; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Frederick County Public Schools; St. Mary's County Public Schools; Wicomico County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Michael E. Sousane

Direct Inquiries to:  
(410) 946-5510  
(301) 970-5510