



February 17, 2020

Bill: HB 1300/SB 1000 – The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future-Implementation

Position: Support with Amendments

Dear Chairs, Vice-Chairs, Senators, and Delegates,

We are writing to express strong support from the Maryland School Psychologists’ Association (MSPA) for House Bill 1300 and Senate Bill 1000 - The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. MSPA is a professional organization representing about 500 school psychologists in Maryland. School psychologists have extensive training and expertise in evaluation, data collection and analysis, mental health service provision, academic and behavioral intervention, and staff development. School psychologists support our state’s schools and have marked positive impact students’ academic and behavioral health outcomes.

MSPA is grateful to have the opportunity to support this highly anticipated legislation aimed to ensure a world-class education for each and every one of Maryland’s students. As mental health providers charged with supporting students’ social emotional, and behavioral successes, we have a unique perspective in appreciating the broad focus and goals of the legislation, particularly with regard to mental health services.

House Bill 1300/Senate Bill 1000, as currently written, includes language that intentionally excludes school psychologists, as well as other non-classroom based educators, from the career ladder program contained in the bill. However, 80% of school psychologists who practice in Maryland bargain under the same contract as our teacher colleagues. As currently written, the bill provides no opportunities for school psychologists to advance in their career and earn a higher salary as we are not eligible to obtain a National Board Certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Without opportunities for equitable career advancement, similar to what is offered to our colleagues, school systems across Maryland will struggle to recruit and retain the most highly qualified school psychologists. This, in turn, restricts our students’ access to frontline mental health treatment, along with the other comprehensive services our schools rely on us to provide.

In addition, the current language in the bill excludes the recommendations from the Kirwan Commission report for ratios of school psychologists. Specifically, the Commission recommended increased staffing of school psychologists to levels commensurate with nationally-recognized ratios (i.e., 1 school psychologist for every 500-700 students). School psychologists in Maryland are currently serving students with a staffing ratio that is often at least three times higher than recommended. Such high ratios impact school psychologists’ availability to directly service the mental health and educational needs of students with fidelity.

We strongly encourage the committee members to consider proposed amendments to address our exclusion from the career ladder program and our ratios of staff to students. MSPA is ready to assist in any way possible as further considerations are made. Please feel free to contact us at legislative@mspaonline.org if we can be of any further assistance. Thank you for your support of this important bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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