

ADVOCATES

FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

To: Chair Pendergrass and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee
From: Shamoyia Gardiner, Education Policy Director
Re: House Bill 409: Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Participation of School-Based Health Centers – Regulations
Date: February 5, 2020
Position: Support

School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) are health clinics located in schools. Services offered typically include primary medical care, mental/behavioral health care, dental/oral health care, health education and promotion, nutrition education, substance abuse counseling, and case management¹. Depending on the model implemented at each school site, a SBHC can serve the student population exclusively or even, as seen in Community Schools across the nation, serve students, staff, families, and the community.

National research has demonstrated **that full-scale implementation of SBHCs result in decreased absenteeism, an elimination of the health care coverage gap between low-income African Americans, and net cost savings for school districts over time**². The report also estimated that SBHCs could save Medicaid about \$35 per student per year--\$1 million annually. In Baltimore City, a Community School with a SBHC was able to take an elementary school student who was a new arrival to the United States on a Monday, provide the physical checkup he needed on-site, and have him enrolled in class by Wednesday. Nationally, high schools with SBHCs see about a 50% drop in chronic absenteeism within 2 months of full-scale implementation.

Barriers to implementation of SBHCs are generally restricted to cost. Allowing a licensed physician or nurse practitioner to be eligible to serve as a SBHC's clinical director goes a long way toward driving down that operating cost and incentivizing the adoption of this effective model.

HB 409 will allow more access to School-Based Health Centers by expanding the eligibility of SBHCs to participate in the Maryland Medical Assistance Program, while potentially decreasing operating costs. **We urge a favorable report on this bill.**

¹ Health Resources & Services Administration. "School-Based Health Centers".

² Guo, et. Al. "School-Based Health Centers: Cost-Benefit analysis and Impact on Health Care Disparities". American Journal of Public Health. September 2010.

Advocates for Children and Youth builds a strong Maryland by advancing policies and programs to ensure children of every race, ethnicity, and place of birth can achieve their full potential.