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Anne Arundel County

Ways and Means Committee

Education Subcommittee

Election Law Subcommittee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Delegate Alice Cain
Before the House Ways and Means Committee**

**In Support of H0515
Public Schools - Staff Members - Report**

Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB515. The idea for this bill was brought to me by Holly Kleiderlein, who is a school counselor here in Anne Arundel County and a member of my Educator's Cabinet, a group of teachers and school counselors who meet with me regularly to help keep me grounded in the realities facing the students they see every day.

This bill is a next step in trying to close the gap between mental health supports needed by students and those actually provided. It requires school boards to report the staff to student ratios of key staff members who provide mental health support to students.

Research indicates that roughly 20 percent of school-age students throughout the country have identified mental health concerns.¹ In Maryland the numbers are similar and we face a mental health crisis in our public schools².

Data shows that 17.3% of high school students, or 50,006 students, reported having seriously contemplated suicide³. Fewer than 30 percent of students with self harm concerns receive the intervention required for effective support and treatment⁴.

But student mental health needs go beyond suicide prevention and self harm. Support is also needed for any number of mental health issues such as adverse childhood experiences,

¹ Thapa, et al., 2013

<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DSFSS/SSSP/Suicide/ResourceGuideMDSuicidePreventionPrograms.pdf>

² <https://www.capitalgazette.com/education/ac-cn-mental-health-20190421-story.html>

³ <https://nccd.cdc.gov/Youthonline/App/Results.aspx?LID=MD>

⁴ Kessler, et al., 2005

<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DSFSS/SSSP/Suicide/ResourceGuideMDSuicidePreventionPrograms.pdf>

anxiety, depression, and eating issues. This bill will allow us to track the data on our staffing levels statewide, and is the next step in addressing student needs.

Recently, I met with the Principal of Annapolis High School and he said having two additional school counselors this school year for a total of seven has made the single most dramatic difference in the ability of the students to learn and in improving the school climate.

When the Blueprint for Maryland's Future passes and additional support for student mental health is funded, this bill will allow us to track the results of that spending, identify areas where we are on target, and identify areas where we need to do more.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on this bill.