

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 515
Public Schools—Staff Members—Report**

**House Ways and Means Committee
February 14, 2020
1:00 p.m.**

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Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 515, which would require county boards of education to report to the State Board annually on the student to staff ratios of various student support personnel.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Never has it been more irrefutable: it truly does take a village to raise a child. As educators, we know that classroom teachers cannot educate our students alone. Our children need the support and participation of a myriad other educators and support professionals, all working collaboratively to stand in the gap and provide that which is required for all our students. Our colleagues who serve as school counselors, school psychologists, social workers, speech and occupational therapists, and bilingual facilitators are critical partners in providing for the needs of the whole child, particularly at a time when far too many of our students show up at school struggling with a wide variety of needs spanning vast arrays of depth and severity. Certificated student support personnel as well as educational support professionals join with classroom teachers and school building leaders to form the phalanx required to meet the growing and continuous academic and non-academic needs of our students.

Yet it is simply incomprehensible how these educators can be expected to carry such a significant load when they themselves are understaffed, overextended, and spread too thin. We know of countless stories of psychologist, counselors, social works and other student support personnel who are singularly charged with meeting the needs of hundreds (and in far too many cases thousands) of students. We also know of some student support personnel being made to serve more than one school building at any given time, thus making it nearly impossible to ever truly meet the needs of any one school as comprehensively as is needed. Not only is this a gross disservice to our colleagues, but it stands as an unconscionable neglect of the growing needs of our students.



The Blueprint for Maryland's Future (HB 1300/SB 1000) seeks to solve this conundrum by including additional funds for wraparound services into the concentrated poverty funding weight. It also provides for the expansion of Community Schools and school-based physical and behavioral health clinics as another means by which to meet the needs provided by these educators.

MSEA believes that the Blueprint for Maryland's Future coupled with this legislation will shed much-needed light on our schools' current needs and will enable us to launch headlong into providing our student support personnel and our students with the resources and supports they need in order to be successful. **We urge a favorable report on House Bill 515.**