

March 4, 2020

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in support of MD HB981, a bill "Requiring each county board of education to allow the use of therapy dogs in public schools in the county; and requiring county boards to adopt a policy for the use of therapy dogs in schools in the county."

As a school counselor at Silver Spring International MS in Montgomery County, Maryland, I have seen the amazing effect therapy dogs have on our students. I have seen these dogs calm students who are very agitated, help students who are very sad and help to motivate students to go back to their classes.

One of our sixth grade students was extremely agitated and went into the girls' bathroom. She was banging the walls and eventually locked herself into a stall. A counselor and an assistant principal tried to speak with her and get her to come out of the bathroom with no success. Our school psychologist's therapy dog, Kozy Girl was brought into the bathroom and successfully drew the student out from the stall and eventually out from the bathroom. The student continued to engage with Kozy Girl and the student opened up and began to speak with the counselor. It was truly amazing.

There have been many instances where I saw Kozy Girl being a tremendous support to counselors and administrators in working with our students. I strongly support having therapy dogs in public schools.

Sincerely,

Alice Baker

Professional School Counselor

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