



Delegate Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Delegate Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill: House Bill 1322 – Primary and Secondary Education-School Personnel-Prohibition on Retaliation for Not Returning to In-Person Instruction and Work

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA), a professional organization representing about 500 school psychologists in Maryland. We advocate for the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic wellbeing of students and families across the state.

School psychologists in Maryland provide mental health counseling, crisis prevention and intervention support, behavioral and academic consultation, and evaluations to identify students with disabilities. Like all educators during this unprecedented global pandemic, we have reimagined our profession to meet the needs of students in distance learning. We have learned new digital platforms and tools to meet with students, connected with countless community partners to secure resources for families, and led teams of dedicated colleagues to problem-solve around student disengagement. In some districts, school psychologists have returned to physical buildings prior to the re-opening of the district to meet the federally mandated timelines for assessment, at great personal risk of infection prior to receiving vaccines. We have watched with pride and amazement as our teacher colleagues and other school-based staff have completely reinvented their professions within a very short period of time in order to continue to provide high quality education to Maryland's students.

Understandably, we were dismayed to hear it suggested by Governor Hogan and State Superintendent Salmon that educators may face retaliation from the state should we choose not to return to physical buildings for in-person instruction when such a return may be judged unsafe. Such a statement communicates a failure to recognize the tremendous and unprecedented effort by educators to support students during this difficult time and fails to recognize the inherent dangers of forcing staff to return to in-person instruction without the guarantee that all school staff who wants to will receive a full course of vaccine. Therefore, we are strongly in favor of Vice Chair Washington's emergency measure to protect Maryland

educators from retaliation who choose not to return to buildings for in-person instruction for the health and safety of themselves and their families.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 1322. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please contact us at legislative@mspaonline.org or Rachael Faulkner at rfaulkner@policypartners.net or (410) 693-4000.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kyle Potter". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the typed name.

Kyle Potter, Ph.D., NCSP
Chair, Legislative Committee
Maryland School Psychologists' Association