



MID-ATLANTIC ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

TO: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee
Members, House Ways and Means Committee
The Honorable Bonnie Cullison

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman

DATE: March 2, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 1148 – *Secretary of Health – School-Based Health Centers – Guidelines and Administration of Grants*

On behalf of the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers, we submit this letter of **support** for House Bill 1148.

House Bill 1124 transfers the responsibility of administering the school-based health center (SBHC) program from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to the Bureau of Maternal and Child Health under the Maryland State Department of Health (MDH). Maryland has made a significant investment in supporting and expanding SBHCs, especially in communities with a high concentration of poverty or where there are significant challenges to accessing basic health care services through the normal health care delivery system. All SBHCs provide basic primary care, and now many SBHCs also provide behavioral health services in response to the number of children facing behavioral health crises. Dental services, particularly in rural regions where there is a shortage of pediatric dental providers, have also been incorporated into the services offered by some SBHCs.

SBHCs serve children, and therefore, SBHC policy should be aligned with the State's broader public health initiatives for children. While SBHCs are often the primary provider of health care services for children and adolescents in medically underserved areas, there is limited integration of SBHCs in larger public health efforts. For example, during this public health emergency most SBHCs were closed and because of MSDE's outdated restrictions on the use of telehealth many of Maryland's most vulnerable children have not had access to needed health care services.

The Bureau of Maternal and Child Health, within MDH, is the State agency in the best position to ensure that SBHCs are incorporated into and aligned with broader public health initiatives that directly impact children and youth such as vaccination outreach strategies; preventive and primary care services; chronic disease prevention and management, including diabetes, asthma, and hypertension; tobacco prevention initiatives; and oral health initiatives.

Passage of House Bill 1148 will help ensure SBHCs are an integral component of Maryland's public health framework for meeting the needs of children and youth. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

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