

Testimony in Support of House Bill 1148

Secretary of Health—School—Based Health Centers—  
Guidelines and Administration of Grants

House Health and Government Operations  
and Ways and Means Committee  
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1:30 pm

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Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 1148, legislation requiring the Secretary of Health, in consultation with the State Department of Education (MSDE) and other, to develop guidelines to support the expansion of school-based health centers. Further, it would require the Governor to transfer the administration of school-based health center grants from MSDE to the Bureau of Maternal and Child Health within the Maryland Department of Health (MDH).

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).

MSEA believes that every Maryland child is a whole child—one that needs to feel healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged in order to eventually see success in college, career and life. In advocating for the needs of the whole child, MSEA members advocate to ensure that every public school in our state is a great public school—one that has updated technology; small, manageable classes; safe and modern school buildings; proper healthcare and nutrition; and highly qualified and highly effective educators. Given access to these resources, we know all of Maryland's students can achieve their full potential.

We have been tenacious advocates for the policies and programs that will give our students access to the resources they need to achieve their full potential. We understand clearly that the health and



wellness of our students has a direct impact on their academic and nonacademic outcomes. Children who are unwell or in pain are more likely to not be in class learning. As such, we do our best to work in conjunction with parents and guardians as well as state and local officials to ensure that our students are healthy and ready to learn. Given the current and future impacts we expect will result from the COVID-19 global pandemic, we believe very strongly that every step must be taken to prepare our schools, our communities, and our state for what lies ahead; and that these efforts must commence with an appropriate sense of urgency.

With the enactment of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (and thus the implementation of dedicated annual funding for the establishment or maintenance of school-based health centers), our state is about to embark upon an historic, multifaceted implementation process—one that will involve educators across the state; various local and state elected officials and agencies; and a significant amount of state and federal tax dollars. This is a consequential endeavor. As such, MSEA believes it should involve the crafting of guidelines and best practices followed by effective implementation via the agencies best suited to the task. We strongly believe that the objectives advanced by this legislation would be a critical factor in establishing and supporting the school-based physical, mental, and behavioral health resources our children desperately need.

**We urge a favorable report on HB 1148.**