

Testimony before Ways and Means Committee

****Support with Amendments****

**HB 496 – Primary and Secondary Education – Mental Health Services – Expansion
(Counselors Not Cops Act)**

February 3, 2021

Maryland’s Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW–MD), which represents professional social workers across the state, supports House Bill 496 and appreciates the recognition that the text of this bill gives to the important role that School Social Workers play in supporting the mental health of students in schools. We are also gratified to see that the interventions promoted by this bill are aligned with the findings of the Kirwan Commission as effective methods for interrupting the School to Prison Pipeline. The increased funding that it mandates will come at what may be a critical era for student mental health support as schools throughout the State of Maryland deal with the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Like our colleagues, the School Counselors and School Psychologists, who are also recognized in this bill for the important roles they play in supporting student mental health and behavior, School Social Workers are also fully certificated under COMAR as educational professionals by the Maryland State Department of Education.

We therefore request the amendments shown below to align the language of the bill to reflect the MSDE-certificated status of School Social Workers.

Amendment No. 1

On page 4, strike lines 13 through 17, and replace with:

(P) “SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER” MEANS AN INDIVIDUAL WHO IS CERTIFIED TO PROVIDE SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK SERVICES TO CHILDREN IN A PUBLIC OR STATE-APPROVED NONPUBLIC SCHOOL SETTING, IN ACCORDANCE WITH REGULATIONS ADOPTED BY THE STATE BOARD.

Amendment No. 2

On page 5, strike lines 19 through 20, and replace with:

(6) A SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER, APPOINTED BY THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT;

Thank you for your consideration of these amendments.

Gail L. Martin, LCSW-C
School Social Worker
Chair; Social Work in School Committee
NASW (Maryland Chapter)