



Delegate Anne R. Kaiser, Chair
Delegate Alonzo T. Washington, Vice Chair
Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building, Room 131
Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill: House Bill 496 – Mental Health Services – Expansion (Counselors Not Cops Act)

Position: Support with Amendments

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 are responsible for providing a comprehensive range of services to students in Maryland schools. These include evaluation, consultation, intervention, and primary mental health services. However, with poor staffing ratios present in nearly every Maryland LEA, focusing on prevention is difficult, which often leads to an approach of intervening after-the-fact, which depending on the severity of an incident, may also include school security or a SRO. We believe that altering the approaches that SROs may use in schools and adding funds to provide schools with additional mental health staff is a move in the right direction for Maryland schools and students. Such a move will lead to more focus on prevention and more readily available mental health services. It will also help to address the equitability concerns that arise when SROs are used in their current capacity in schools.

MSPA supports HB 496 with the amendments listed below. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please contact us at legislative@mspaonline.org or our policy consultant, Rachael Faulkner, at rfaulkner@policypartners.net or 410-693-4000.

Requested amendments:

Section 7-1504 (b) (5) – A school psychologist ~~for licensed or clinical social worker~~, appointed by the ~~State Superintendent~~ **President of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association;**

Rationale: Given that the bill adds a licensed or clinical social worker in 7-1504 (b) (6), the option to replace a school psychologist with such a professional becomes moot. Additionally, the Maryland School Psychologists' Association is in a better position to appoint a school

psychologist to this Advisory Board as it has ready access to members with the appropriate expertise and experience.

Section 7-1511.1. (A) (1) – Hiring ~~or contracting with~~ school psychologists, school social workers, school counselors, and behavioral specialists...

Section 7-1511.1. (B) To the extent practicable, a local school system shall use the grants provided under this section to hire ~~and contract with~~ professionals under subsection (A)...

Rationale: It is the position of MSPA that school-based mental health providers should be school-employed mental health providers. Public money should go towards stable employment of properly credentialed professionals with the associated benefits and union protection afforded by Maryland LEAs.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Potter", with a small square notepad icon to its left.

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