



Board of Education of Howard County  
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate,  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
April 5, 2022

Board of Education  
of Howard County

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**HB0657: FAVORABLE W/AMENDMENTS**  
**Public Schools - Standardized Behavioral Health Questionnaire for Students -  
Development and Implementation**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **HB0657 Public Schools - Standardized Behavioral Health Questionnaire for Students - Development and Implementation** with amendments to ensure thoughtful implementation is applied to expanded behavioral health services under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

Under the existing legal requirements for the Behavioral Health Services Coordinator in each local school system to develop and implement a standardized screening to identify students with behavioral health service needs, HB0657 as amended by the House calls for the screening to be replaced with a questionnaire that would be based on guidelines to be developed by the Blueprint's Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports. The guidelines would be developed in consultations with a list of stakeholders (starts page 3 line 15) and updated every five years.

As the development of guidelines for a standardized behavioral health screening would allow for consistency across the state, HCPSS staff supported this original language of HB0657. However, there are no behavioral health professionals recommended for the consortium. Representation for any number of behavioral health professional associations such as the Maryland School Psychologists Association, the Maryland Association of School Counselors, the Maryland School Social Worker Association, should be added.

HB0657 as amended requires the standardized questionnaire developed by the school system be given to all parents when a student enrolls and every year thereafter while the student is enrolled in the local school system – with no timeframe in the bill and an effective date of July 1, 2022, this implies it would be a requirement as of school year 2022-2023. While perhaps less intrusive than a screening, similar resources would be needed for distribution, collection, and follow-up on such questionnaires.

As identified in the Board's legislative priorities for student well-being, if the Blueprint envisions all children being screened annually, it will require sufficient funding and school-based staff resources. Until the scope of expanded mental health services called for under the Blueprint – and the role of a screening vs. questionnaire to best serve intended outcomes – can be systematically addressed based on the yet-to-be-developed local implementation plans, which will be reviewed and approved

based on guidance from the Accountability and Implementation Board and the Maryland State Department of Education, this mandate should be removed from the bill.

For these reasons, we urge a FAVORABLE report of HB0865 from this Committee on the development of standardized guidelines for behavioral health screenings, with removal of any mandatory distribution.