



Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West
Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill: House Bill 657 - Public Schools – School Psychologist Recruitment Program

Position: Support with Amendments

Dear Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, 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 throughout Maryland. We advocate for the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic well-being of students and families across the state.

We strongly support the concept of increased screening of students for behavioral health needs but have concerns about the ability of schools to fully follow up with children whose screenings indicate a potential need for behavioral health support. Although the Blueprint included resources to support student behavioral health needs, the 2019 Commission on Innovation & Excellence in Education report noted that “[p]roviding access to behavioral health programming and services assumes increasing the ratio of guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers, etc. to industry-recognized ratios: 500-700 students per psychologist, 400 students per social worker, and 250 students per guidance counselor.” Staffing ratios for school psychologists are currently nowhere close to the Commission’s recommended staffing ratios. **Passing legislation such as HB 657, should be accompanied with increased funding for school behavioral health staffing or an earmarking of current school behavioral health funding for retention and recruitment of school behavioral health providers.**

Additionally, we request the following amendment because we feel the Consortium has the expertise needed to develop a behavioral health questionnaire but would like the Consortium to be able to get any input they feel they need:

One Page 3, Line 30, strike “**THE FOLLOWING**” and substitute “**ANY INTERESTED**” and in Line 31 strike “**SELECTED**” and substitute “**IDENTIFIED**”

One Page 3, Line 31 starting with “:” strike through “**PROTECTION**” on Page 4, Line 17

MSPA supports HB 657 but strongly believes that the state needs to also consider broader investment in school behavioral health staffing. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please contact us at legislative@mspaonline.org or Scott Tiffin at stiffin@policypartners.net.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Phipps
Chair, Legislative Committee
Maryland School Psychologists' Association