

# **SB 856 Testimony Senator Eckardt.pdf**

Uploaded by: Adelaide Eckardt

Position: FAV

**ADDIE C. ECKARDT**

*Legislative District 37*

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Budget and Taxation Committee

Health and Human Services  
Subcommittee

*Joint Committees*

Administrative, Executive,  
and Legislative Review

Audit

Children, Youth, and Families

Fair Practices and  
State Personnel Oversight

Pensions

**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**

**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

*District Office*

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Testimony for Senate Bill 856  
Public Schools – Health Services – School Nurses  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
March 8, 2022

Chairman Pinsky and Honorable Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present **Senate Bill 856 - Public Schools – Health Services – School Nurses**.

It is currently within the scope of County government to designate how health services within schools are provided. With the assistance of the local health department (LHD), each local board of education (BOE) must provide adequate school health services, instruction in health education, and a healthful school environment. As a result, there are currently variations in how school healthcare is provided. Currently, in some jurisdictions, local BOE directly hire and employ school nurses. In other jurisdictions, LHD hire and employ nurses for public schools and make decisions in consultation with the BOE about how services will be provided. Different BOEs and LHDs employ different mixes of registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, other certified medical workers, or unlicensed health staff working under the supervision of an registered nurse (who may be responsible for more than one school).

When there is a not a nurse on site, schools rely on certified nursing assistants or even unlicensed school health aides. While these staff provide important support services, only a school nurse can coordinate complex health services, manage chronic diseases, administer medications, and integrate behavioral health services into the schools. An increasing number of our students are coming to school with complex and special health needs. A registered nurse is equipped with the ability to manage these complex chronic issues.

This bill would require each local board of education, with the assistance of the LHD, to provide a full-time registered nurse (RN) in each school, resulting in greater consistency and ultimately better healthcare for students in Maryland public schools. Requiring this of nurses will lead to a higher standard of care for students, resulting in proper treatment of medical issues they may have, and getting them healthy and back to class as soon as possible.

Healthcare in schools is essential for early preventative care as not all parents have the skills to detect ailments in their children or help their children while they are in school. Requiring nurses to have this higher certificate and work full-time will result in a more extensive skill set to properly take care of students. Thank you for your consideration and I urge a favorable report of SB856.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Addie C. Eckardt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A".

Senator Addie C. Eckardt

**Written testimony in support of SB0856.pdf**

Uploaded by: Caroline Kemp

Position: FAV

**Written testimony in support of SB0856**  
**By Caroline Kemp, on behalf of herself**  
1300 N St. NW #807  
Washington, DC 20005  
3/8/2022

I am a nurse practitioner and a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) student. My DNP capstone project has been a policy analysis on school-based mental health services. Based on my research including interviewing school nurses in different states, I have found that school nurses are an *essential* component to combatting the mental health crisis facing our youth today.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health concerns were the leading cause of disability and poor life outcomes in young people, with up to 1 in 5 children ages 3 to 17 in the U.S. having a mental, developmental, or behavioral disorder (Hamilton & Gross, 2021). More than 1 in 3 high school students experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness in 2019, a 40 percent increase since 2009 and about 1 in 6 youth reported making a suicide plan in 2019, a 44% increase since 2009 (CDC, 2021).

The mental health crisis has now been compounded by the pandemic. In December, the Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy issued an advisory to highlight the urgent need to address the nation's youth mental health crisis (Office of the Surgeon General, 2021). In his State of the Union last week, President Biden called the nation's mental health crisis a priority for his administration. The psychological costs of the pandemic will continue to persist for years to come, especially with the concurrent rise in social media use, with students as young as kindergarteners getting smartphones. The role of the school nurse is more crucial than ever.

First, children and adolescents may not have access to trained mental health care providers outside of the school setting. Placing a nurse in every school will help increase access to care for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic status, where they live, or their level of health coverage. School nurses consult with counselors and therapists in the school setting,

make referrals and coordinate care with providers in the community, and communicate with teachers and families.

Second, nurses are trained to use critical thinking and look at the whole child, including both physical and mental needs or symptoms. So often physical conditions have a mental health component, and vice versa. School nurses are sometimes the first to notice symptoms of mental distress through somatic manifestations, such as headaches, dizziness, nausea, or noticing signs of self-harm. Students will often open up to a nurse before talking to a therapist or counselor. There is no stigma attached to the nurse's office. Having a reliable and consistent nurse present in schools can facilitate engaging families in the care of their students. Parents are often hesitant to talk about mental health but are more open to talking with the school nurse.

Third, school nurses can also help teachers and staff with their own self-care through employee wellness programs but even more importantly, they can reduce the burden of non-healthcare staff members functioning as such. When school nurses are rotating between schools or simply not present in schools daily, other staff members must fill in with triaging medical or mental health issues or administering medications, which can be very dangerous. Placing a nurse in every school will improve the care provided to students which will alleviate that burden from overworked teachers and administrators.

Using the policy analysis paradigm of evaluating effectiveness, efficiency, and equity, this bill checks all the boxes. Putting a nurse in every school would improve the effectiveness of mental health care by increasing screening, diagnoses, and referrals. This bill would improve efficiency of mental health care by investing in low-cost prompt care as opposed to costly in-patient services if mental health concerns go undiagnosed. And this bill would improve equity by increasing access of care to all students. Maryland should be a leader in the US and put a nurse in every school.

## References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2021, May 12). *Mental health*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/mental-health/index.htm#:~:text=Mental%20Health%20Is%20A%20Growing%20Problem,-chart%20bar%20icon&text=More%20than%201%20in%203,a%2044%25%20increase%20since%202009>.
- Hamilton, L., & Gross, B. (2021). *How has the pandemic affected students' social-emotional well-being? A review of the evidence to date*. Center on Reinventing Public Education. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED614131.pdf>
- Office of the Surgeon General. (2021, December 27). *U.S. Surgeon General Issues Advisory on Youth Mental Health Crisis further exposed by covid-19 pandemic*. HHS.gov. <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/12/07/us-surgeon-general-issues-advisory-on-youth-mental-health-crisis-further-exposed-by-covid-19-pandemic.html>

**12b - X - SB 856 - MBON - LOS.docx.pdf**

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Position: FAV





# Board of Nursing

Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis R. Schrader, Secretary

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March 8, 2022

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky  
Chair, Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

**RE: SB 856 – Public Schools – Health Services – School Nurses – Letter of Support**

Dear Chair Pinsky and Committee Members:

The Maryland Board of Nursing (the Board) respectfully submits this letter of support for Senate Bill (SB) 856 – Public Schools – Health Services – School Nurses. This bill requires each county board of education to provide a certain nurse at each public school.

The Board strongly supports requiring each county board of education, with the assistance of the county health department, to provide a full time registered nurse (RN) in each public school. The school nurse provides the expertise to identify, assess, plan, implement, and evaluate the health needs of the school community. There are, however, significant barriers to providing this service as the current school health landscape cannot provide a dedicated RN for each school setting. Instead, nurses travel among schools within a district or county.<sup>1</sup> This barrier has been further exacerbated due to the COVID-19 pandemic and nursing workforce shortage. The Board believes it is imperative to station a full time RN in each school, not only for the health and safety of the students, but also for the supervision of other health personnel.

The school nurse works in conjunction with other personnel in the school health setting, including licensed practical nurses (LPN), certified nursing assistants – school health (CNA – SH), and certified medication technicians (CMT). A school nurse must supervise and be readily available when these individuals perform delegated tasks; provide first aid; give emergency care and medications; and assist in monitoring student health status. The absence of a school nurse not only substantially limits the amount of care other school health personnel can provide, but also tremendously disrupts the continuity of treatment for students.

For the reasons discussed above, the Maryland Board of Nursing respectfully submits this letter of support for SB 856.

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<sup>1</sup> School Health Nurse Staffing. Montgomery County Commission on Health. Nov 2019.

I hope this information is useful. For more information, please contact Iman Farid, Health Policy Analyst, at (410) 585-1536 ([iman.farid@maryland.gov](mailto:iman.farid@maryland.gov)) or Rhonda Scott, Deputy Director, at (410) 585-1953 ([rhonda.scott2@maryland.gov](mailto:rhonda.scott2@maryland.gov)).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Hicks", written in a cursive style.

Gary N. Hicks  
Board President

**The opinion of the Board expressed in this document does not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Health or the Administration.**

**NCADD-MD - SB 856 FAV - A Nurse in Every School.pd**

Uploaded by: Nancy Rosen-Cohen

Position: FAV



**Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee  
March 8, 2022**

**Senate Bill 856  
Public Schools – Health Services – School Nurses  
Support**

The Maryland Affiliate of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD-Maryland) supports Senate Bill 856 to require each local board of education in the state to provide a full-time registered nurse in each school.

There has been a significant increase in attention to the needs of children and youth since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. These needs include young people's physical health as well as their mental health. Mental health and substance use problems have increased because of the stress and anxiety families have faced amidst a worldwide pandemic.

Schools are often on the front line when it comes to addressing behavioral health problems experienced by young people. While registered nurses are not generally trained in mental health and substance use disorder treatment, they are trained to conduct basic health assessments and can recognize when additional services are needed.

It is important that our schools have an adequate amount of support services that our children need. At the same time, a school nurse or a school social worker cannot and should not take the place of community-based services that can more comprehensively meet the mental health and substance use needs of children and their families. Ensuring our schools have the capacity to provide crisis support and identify and refer youth and their families to appropriate care in the community is essential to the well-being of our communities.

The cost of having a nurse in every school pales in comparison to the money we spend now with other emergency interventions. The value of our children's health is immeasurable. We urge your support of Senate Bill 856.

*The Maryland Affiliate of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD-Maryland) is a statewide organization that works to influence public and private policies on addiction, treatment, and recovery, reduce the stigma associated with the disease, and improve the understanding of addictions and the recovery process. We advocate for and with individuals and families who are affected by alcoholism and drug addiction.*

**2022 ACNM SB 856 Senate Side.pdf**

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV



**Committee:** Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

**Bill Number:** Senate Bill 856 - Public Schools - Health Services - School Nurses

**Hearing Date:** March 8, 2022

**Position:** Support

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The Maryland Affiliate of American College of Nurse Midwives (ACNM) supports *Senate Bill 856 – Public Health Services – School Nurses*. The bill requires every public school to have a full-time nurse. School nurses play a pivotal role in ensuring the health and safety of children in schools, yet they are often assigned multiple schools to cover. This practice means that school nurses may not be on the grounds when a child with a chronic disease, such as diabetes, has an emergency. While there may be a certified nursing assistant or unlicensed health aide on site, they cannot provide the scope of care that registered nurses can provide.

Maryland has made significant investment in education in the last year. We ask that there be an investment in ensuring that students remain healthy and safe so that they can stay in school and continue to learn.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Robyn Elliott at [relliott@policypartners.net](mailto:relliott@policypartners.net).

**2022 MCHS SB 856 Senate Side.pdf**

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV



## Maryland Community Health System

**Committee:** Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

**Bill:** Senate Bill 856 – Public Schools – Health Services – School Nurses

**Hearing Date:** March 8, 2022

**Position:** Support

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Maryland Community Health System supports *Senate Bill 856 – Public Schools – Health Services – School Nurses*. The bill will require each public school to have a full-time registered nurse, also known as a school nurse.

Maryland Community Health System is a network of federally qualified health centers with a focus on providing somatic, behavioral, and oral health care services to underserved communities. School nurses are essential to ensuring students are healthy, yet many counties do not have a nurse in every school. According to data provided by the Maryland State Department of Education, many counties assign nurses to multiple schools. The following are just examples of jurisdictions that do not have a nurse in every school: Anne Arundel – 77 nurses for 124 schools, Baltimore City – 77 nurses for 174 schools, and Kent County – 2 nurses for 5 schools.

Students in schools without a full-time nurse are at a great disadvantage. School nurses make sure that students daily health care needs are met, including medication management for chronic diseases, coordination of health services for medically complex children, and management of medical emergencies.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Robyn Elliott at [relliott@policypartners.net](mailto:relliott@policypartners.net).



**2022 MNA SB 856 Senate Side.pdf**

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV



**Committee:** Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**Bill Number:** Senate Bill 856 - Public Schools - Health Services - School Nurses

**Hearing Date:** March 8, 2022

**Position:** Support

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The Maryland Nurses Association (MNA) strongly supports *Senate Bill 856 – Public Schools – Health Services – School Nurses*. The bill would require local school systems to ensure there is a full-time nurse in every school. Under current law, local school systems are required to maintain a school health program, but there is no minimum obligation for the school nurse staffing.

**More School Nurses Needed in Maryland**

The National Association of School Nurses has stated that “access to a school nurse all day, every day can improve students’ health, safety, and educational achievement.”<sup>i</sup> Maryland falls short of this goal with an average of 0.74 registered nurses for every school, according to data from the Maryland State Department of Education (see attached). There are wide gaps in access to school nursing. The following jurisdictions have less than the average school nurses per school: Anne Arundel (0.62), Baltimore City (0.30), Calvert (0.72), Frederick (0.38), Garret (no RNs in the school system), Kent (0.40), Montgomery (0.57), Somerset (0.67), and Washington (0.36).

Maryland needs just under 400 more nurses to reach the goal of a full-time nurse in every school. The number may be higher if we take into account that more than one nurse may be needed for larger schools.

## Why Every School Needs a Nurse

Maryland needs a nurse in every school because students' health needs have become more complex. As we have seen as students return to in-person classes in recent months, students have layers of unmet health needs that impede their ability to learn and integrate into the classroom.

### **School nurses are essential to support:**

- **Students with complex medical needs.** Children with complex needs are those with chronic, severe health conditions, major functional limitations, and substantial health service needs<sup>ii</sup> School nurses are essential in ensuring these students can remain in school;
- **Students with increasing behavioral health needs.** Children and adolescents are facing a mental health crises. Youth suicide deaths have already been on the increase in Maryland. Between 2007 and 2018, youth suicide deaths rose by 21%. Now in the aftermath of the pandemic, children and adolescents are facing even greater risks. Leading health care organizations have declared a "National Emergency in Child and Adolescent Mental Health."<sup>iii</sup>

Maryland is planning to make significant investments in behavioral health in schools in recognition of the youth behavioral health crises. Yet implementation of new behavioral health programs will be challenging in schools without a full-time nurses. School nurses coordinate all somatic and behavioral health services provided to students.

- **Students with chronic diseases such as diabetes, asthma, and hypertension.** One-fourth of children have a chronic disease, and 5 % have multiple chronic conditions. The numbers of children with chronic conditions has been rising.<sup>iv</sup> School nurses coordinate care with a student's primary care provider to manage student's chronic conditions and improve their health outcomes. School nurses administer treatments, including medication, to ensure students can remain in school.
- **Students in health emergencies.** It is estimated that 10-25% of emergencies for children occur while they are in school.<sup>v</sup> School nurses are the key in managing those emergencies effectively.

## How Other States Address School Nursing in Statute

Seventeen states set standards or guidelines for the number of school nurses in state statute:<sup>vi</sup>

- **A Nurse in Every School:** Two states, Delaware and Massachusetts, require school systems to ensure there is a registered nurse in every school. There is pending legislation in West Virginia.
- **School Nurse Ratios:** Fifteen states set a school nurse ratio, mostly commonly one school nurse for every 750 students. States with ratios are: Alabama, Arkansas, Iowa, Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, North Carolina, Nebraska, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, and West Virginia.

## How School Nursing is Administered in Maryland

Maryland law requires each local boards of education to maintain a school health program, which includes school nurses. Each jurisdiction can make individual arrangements on which agency employs the school nurses: local board of education (14 jurisdictions), local health department (9 jurisdictions), and local hospital system (1 jurisdiction).

## Conclusion

Students have a growing number of complex medical needs, including behavioral health. School nurses are essential to protecting the health of students and ensuring they can remain in school. We ask for a favorable report to ensure that all schools have at least one nurse. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at [relliott@policypartners.net](mailto:relliott@policypartners.net).

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.nasn.org/nasn-resources/professional-practice-documents/position-statements/ps-workload>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.childrenshospitals.org/issues-and-advocacy/children-with-medical-complexity/issue-briefs-and-reports/the-landscape-of-medical-care-for-children-with-medical-complexity>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/child-and-adolescent-healthy-mental-development/aap-aacap-cha-declaration-of-a-national-emergency-in-child-and-adolescent-mental-health/>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5010981/#R41>

<sup>v</sup> <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article-abstract/122/4/887/71309/Medical-Emergencies-Occurring-at-School?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

<sup>vi</sup> [https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/HEALTHYPEOPLEFAMILIES/YOUTH/HEALTHSCHOOL/Documents/TFSN/Nationwide\\_School\\_Nurse\\_Funding\\_and\\_Requirements\\_Comparison.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/HEALTHYPEOPLEFAMILIES/YOUTH/HEALTHSCHOOL/Documents/TFSN/Nationwide_School_Nurse_Funding_and_Requirements_Comparison.pdf)

	Employer (2022)	School Nurses	Licensed Practical Nurses	Certified Nursing Assistant	Other Health Services	Enrollment (2018-19)	Schools Count	Students Per Nurse	Nurses Per School
Allegany	LDH	22	1	0	6	8539	26	388	0.85
Anne Arundel	LDH	77	21	135.5	7	83300	124	1082	0.62
Baltimore	LSS	173	0	40	0	113814	174	658	0.99
Baltimore City	LSS	50	3	127	1	79297	167	1585.94	0.30
Calvert	LSS	18	7	0	2	15936	25	885.33	0.72
Caroline	LSS	8	2	7	0	5829	10	728.63	0.80
Carroll	LSS	48	3	0	3	25179	44	524.56	1.09
Cecil	LSS	29	0	0	0	15307	29	527.83	1.00
Charles	LDH	35	9	0	0	27108	38	774.51	0.92
Dorchester	LHD	12	4	1*	1*	4785	13	398.75	0.92
Frederick	LDH	26	8	56	0	42713	68	1642.81	0.38
Garrett	LSS	0	11	0	0	3842	12	NA	NA
Harford	LSS	61	5	0	0	37826	54	620.10	1.13
Howard	LDH	59	0	62	0	57907	77	981.47	0.77
Kent	LDH	2	0	4	1	1912	5	956.00	0.40
Montgomery	LDH	118	0	212	59	162680	208	1378.64	0.57
Prince George's	LSS	198	21	0	2	132667	208	670.04	0.95
Queen Anne's	LSS	14	2	0	0	7749	14	553.50	1.00
SEED School	LSS	1	1	0	1	404	1	404.00	1.00
Somerset	LDH	6	4	1	1	2930	9	488.33	0.67
St. Mary's	LSS	33	3	0	0	17999	30	545.42	1.10
Talbot	LSS	6	0	6	1	4674	8	779.00	0.75
Washington	Local Hospital	16	10	26	1	22681	45	1417.56	0.36
Wicomico	LSS	28	0	9	2	14949	25	533.89	1.12
Worcester	LSS	17	0	0	0	6810	14	400.59	1.21
<b>Statewide</b>		1057	115	685.5	87	896837	1428	848.47	0.74

**Notes** \* 1 person certified as CNA and CMT

Data Source and Years: Nursing data from 2018-2019 MSDE Survey; Enrollment and school count data from 2018-2019 MdReportCard Enrollment Data; the local employer is current year (2022)

**2022 MOTA SB 856 Senate Side.pdf**

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV



# Maryland Occupational Therapy Association

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PO Box 36401, Towson, Maryland 21286 ♦ [motamembers.org](http://motamembers.org)

**Committee:** Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

**Bill Number:** Senate Bill 856 - Public Schools - Health Services - School Nurses

**Hearing Date:** March 8, 2022

**Position:** Support

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The Maryland Occupational Therapy Association supports *Senate Bill 856 – Public Health Services – School Nurses*. The bill requires every public school to have a full-time nurse. Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants work closely with school nurses to coordinate services for students with special needs, including those with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). School nurses are essential to students with IEPs being successful in school, yet they are often stretched to capacity because they are assigned to cover multiple schools. This situation has become much worse after two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Students are returning to school with significantly more complex somatic and behavioral health issues related to the impact of the pandemic.

We ask for a favorable report on this bill. Maryland’s baseline in health care staffing should be a nurse in every school. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Scott Tiffin at [stiffin@policypartners.net](mailto:stiffin@policypartners.net).



**2022 LCPCM SB 856 Senate Side.pdf**

Uploaded by: Scott Tiffin

Position: FAV



**Committee:** Senate Health, Education and Environmental Affairs Committee

**Bill Number:** Senate Bill 856

**Title:** Public Schools - Health Services - School Nurses

**Hearing Date:** March 8, 2022

**Position:** Support

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The Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors of Maryland (LCPCM) supports *Senate Bill 856 – Public Schools - Health Services - School Nurses*.

This bill would ensure that every school has a full-time school nurse. There is currently a lot of discussion about the importance of behavioral health services in schools. We strongly support increased investment in childhood behavioral health services but believe that should be accompanied by increased investment in school nursing. School nurses play an essential role in identifying students in need of support and coordinating services. We support SB 856 because school-based behavioral health services are most effective when there is a school nurse to assist.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Scott Tiffin at [stiffin@policypartners.net](mailto:stiffin@policypartners.net).

**2022 MASBHC SB 856 Senate Side.pdf**

Uploaded by: Scott Tiffin

Position: FAV



PO Box 716  
Baltimore, MD 21233  
202.669.0031 phone

## **Support**

### **House Bill 856 – Public Schools - Health Services - School Nurses**

Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

March 8, 2022

The Maryland Assembly on School-Based Health Care (MASBHC) supports House Bill 856 – Public Schools - Health Services - School Nurses. This bill would ensure that every school has a full-time school nurse.

Our members provide primary care, oral and dental health services to students across the state. In recognition of the importance of school-based health centers, the Blueprint for Maryland's Future included \$9.0 million annually to support school-based health centers. School-based health centers are most effective when a school has a school nurse to help coordinate student care. School nurses are an important connection between school-based health centers and the broader school health system.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony, and we urge a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Scott Tiffin at [stiffin@policypartners.net](mailto:stiffin@policypartners.net) or (443) 350-1325.

**2022 MDAC SB 856 Senate Side.pdf**

Uploaded by: Suhani Chitalia

Position: FAV



10015 Old Columbia Road, Suite B-215  
Columbia, Maryland 21046  
[www.mdac.us](http://www.mdac.us)

**Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs**  
**Senate Bill 856 - Public Schools - Health Services - School Nurses**  
**March 8, 2022**  
**Support**

The Maryland Dental Action Coalition (MDAC) strongly supports *Senate Bill 856 – Public Schools – Health Services – School Nurses*. The bill would require schools to have at least one full-time nurse.

MDAC supports measures to ensure the overall health, including oral health of children. Dental caries, also known as cavities, is one of the most common diseases afflicting a student population with 20% of children between the ages of 5 and 11 having at least one untreated cavity.<sup>i</sup> In the Maryland Oral Health Plan 2018-2023, a primary goal is to “increase the number of school-based dental screening and sealant programs.”<sup>ii</sup> To achieve this goal, MDAC collaborated with the Office of Oral Health at the Maryland Department of Health to conduct an assessment of dental sealant programs. The results of that assessment made clear that school nurses are essential:

*“Throughout the survey, responses highlighted the extremely vital role that nurses play within dental sealant programs. If there was a “champion” for a dental sealant program within the school, it was the nurse, and nurses were involved in various parts of coordinating and implementing sealant programs.”<sup>iii</sup>*

MDAC asks for a favorable report. School nurses are the key to ensuring students are healthy and safe. All Maryland students deserve a nurse in their school who ensures that their somatic, behavioral, and oral health needs are met. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Suhani Chitalia at [schitalia@policypartners.net](mailto:schitalia@policypartners.net).

***Optimal Oral Health for All Marylanders***

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/basics/childrens-oral-health/index.html>

<sup>ii</sup> [https://www.mdac.us/file\\_download/inline/de993e4e-e717-45b4-aff0-435d29cf4c8e](https://www.mdac.us/file_download/inline/de993e4e-e717-45b4-aff0-435d29cf4c8e)

<sup>iii</sup> <https://files.constantcontact.com/f29af31a201/0edc26fb-bb6c-41a7-8e05-28f56f5ecb6d.pdf>

***Optimal Oral Health for All Marylanders***

**SB0856-EHE\_MACo\_OPP.pdf**

Uploaded by: Brianna January

Position: UNF





## **Senate Bill 856**

### *Public Schools – Health Services – School Nurses*

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Education, Health, and Environmental  
Affairs Committee

Date: March 8, 2022

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 856. This bill would require each public school to employ a full-time registered nurse, a mandate that is not realistic for the unique workings of Maryland's diverse school districts.

Counties are proud to support public schools and agree with the general merit of the bill that Maryland's public school students deserve access to appropriate health professionals in our public schools. However, SB 856 fails to consider the range of regionally specific student needs that each jurisdiction factors into its hiring and staffing of school health professionals.

Currently, local governments employ school nurses through a variety of arrangements that best suit the unique needs of each school district – some do so through the local boards of education, while others do so through the county departments of health. Counties base this decision on several considerations, including available resources, hiring and management preferences, and collective bargaining. SB 856 mandates that all school nurses be employed through county boards of education.

This would upend successful existing programs in counties that staff school nurses through departments of health. Under the bill, existing school nurses employed by local departments of health would have to be fired or undergo a rehiring process through the local board of education. This is not reasonable nor feasible as the state continues to suffer from a shortage of registered nurses, which is exacerbated by an ongoing exodus of school staff.

Furthermore, SB 856 fails to consider student population density as a varied factor unique to Maryland's diverse locales. While having a registered nurse full-time in public schools with large student populations may make sense for some jurisdictions, it is not necessarily best-practice for schools that have smaller student populations. Additionally, mobile school nurses who are jointly employed by neighboring low enrollment schools may be a more appropriate fit for the needs of some schools and their local jurisdictions. This flexibility not only allows districts to stretch scarce staffing, but also to be financially responsible while still providing safe school facilities for Maryland's students.

Unfortunately, SB 856 would take away that flexibility and would impose a one-size-fits-all approach for employing school nurses, which is not operationally or fiscally appropriate for all counties. For these reasons, MACo **OPPOSES** SB 856 and urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report.

**SB856 School Nurses 3.8.22.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jeanette Ortiz

Position: UNF



## **SB856 PUBLIC SCHOOLS - HEALTH SERVICES - SCHOOL NURSES**

March 8, 2022

EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

### **OPPOSE**

Jeanette Ortiz, Esq., Legislative & Policy Counsel (410.703.5352)

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) opposes **SB856 Public Schools - Health Services - School Nurses**. This legislation requires each county board of education to provide a full-time registered nurse at each public school.

AACPS recognizes the importance of developing a healthy school environment which promotes student health, well-being, and the ability to learn. To that end, AACPS currently collaborates with the Anne Arundel County Department of Health to provide staffing support from registered nurses, health assistants, and nurse supervisors in all AACPS health offices. However, the Department of Health is currently experiencing a nursing shortage in the district. In fact, there are 12 such vacancies at this time. As such, the Department's Director of School Health has been compelled to utilize an outside agency to support schools until vacancies are filled.

Under this bill, either AACPS or the Anne Arundel County Department of Health would be required to hire 35 additional registered nurses at a cost of approximately \$2.5 million in salaries per school year. AACPS opposes legislative efforts and proposals that reduce or circumscribe local authority or create unfunded mandates.

It is important to note that county registered nurses are ineligible for State retirement benefits and this reality contributes to high turnover rates. Perhaps addressing this issue is something the General Assembly can consider.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on SB856.

# **SB 856.Registered Nurse in Every School Mandate .p**

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: UNF

**BILL:** Senate Bill 856  
**TITLE:** Public Schools - Health Services - School Nurses  
**DATE:** March 8, 2022  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**COMMITTEE:** Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes Senate Bill 856, which would require the placement of a registered nurse in every public school.

MABE generally opposes efforts by the General Assembly to legislate on a state-wide basis the inherently local personnel policies and administrative decisions based on local priorities available resources. Senate Bill 856 would do so by establishing a new mandate that local boards of education provide a full-time registered nurse in each public school. The bill would impose this mandate effective July 1, 2022 and provide no additional state funding to support the hiring, by either a local health department or school system, of new registered nurses. In addition, the bill does not address the consequences the bill would have for other school health staff whose positions, and offices, would presumably be filled by these new registered nurses. MABE's opposition to this bill does not rest on an evaluation of the merits of hiring registered nurses to lead and provide school health service operations in schools across the state. Rather, MABE's opposition is grounded in support for local governance and policy-making authority in personnel matters.

Local boards have always placed a very high priority on providing school facilities, school meals, and programs of instruction designed to promote the physical and behavioral health and fitness of students and to prepare them to maintain a healthy lifestyle as adults. MABE advocates that legislation addressing specific student health issues such as diabetes, allergies, medical cannabis, and other chronic and acute conditions reflect the input of school health professionals and the consideration of available staff and resources.

For the past two 2 years the pandemic has presented enormous challenges in meeting the physical and mental health needs of students, requiring major changes in school meal programs, responses to the trauma caused by the economic, health, and educational impacts of the pandemic. In addition, the pandemic is imposing extraordinary burdens on school health personnel. MABE believes it is critical that state and local budgets recognize these burdens and the associated costs.

Local boards also recognize the state role in governing student and school health issues through laws and regulations and advocates that such requirements should not be overly prescriptive, costly, or burdensome. MABE advocates that local school systems and our dedicated school nurses and other health professionals are consulted as new requirements for board policies and school-based practices are considered. Student health issues addressed in this manner include diabetes, anaphylactic allergies, sickle cell disease, medical cannabis, and concussions.

Under current law and regulations, school health services must be overseen by a “designated school health services professional” but may also be provided by “school health services aide”. The definition of "designated school health services professional" includes a physician, certified nurse practitioner, or registered nurse, or all of these, with experience or special training, or both, in working with children and families in community or school health programs and practices in accordance with the current medical and nursing standards of care” (COMAR 13A.05.05.06).

The definition of “school health services aide” does include an “unlicensed person who functions under the supervision of a designated school health services professional.” However, the regulations clearly provide that “The designated school health professional shall determine the required degree of supervision on an individual basis. A school health services aide, at a minimum, shall be certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation annually and a basic first aid course every 3 years.” Regarding the administration of medication, the regulations found under COMAR 13A.15.11.04 also ensure the direct supervision by health professions, including registered nurses.

Again, MABE is concerned that placing a universal mandate on systems to reallocate funding to create new positions would create undue hardship on local school system budgets. Each of Maryland’s local boards and school systems have the governance authority to hire and designate personnel, including school nurses, and MABE strongly supports their continued authority in this area.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 856.

**12a - X - SB 856 - EHEA - MACHO - LOC.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: State of Maryland

Position: UNF



**2022 SESSION  
POSITION PAPER**

**BILL:** SB 856 – Public Schools – Health Services – School Nurses

**COMMITTEE:** Senate - Finance Committee

**POSITION:** Letter of Concern

**BILL ANALYSIS:** SB 856 would require each county board of education to provide a full-time registered nurse in each public school.

**POSITION RATIONALE:** Senate Bill (SB) 856 would require every public school in Maryland to have a full-time registered nurse (RN). School nurses play an important role in promoting health, wellness and learning in Maryland public schools. The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) fully supports the intent behind SB 856, but from a practical standpoint, we are concerned the lack of existing funds and the currently strained nursing applicant pool will prevent school systems and local health departments from carrying out the sponsor's intentions.

Of Maryland's 24 local health departments, approximately 14 are directly responsible for hiring and employing nurses for the public schools in their jurisdiction. In the rest of the jurisdictions, this responsibility falls on the school system. Due to the unique needs and constraints in each jurisdiction, LHDs work closely with public school systems to determine how nursing services will be provided. Some jurisdictions have an RN in each school, others have licensed practical nurses, and some utilize unlicensed health staff working under the appropriate supervision of an RN who may be responsible for more than one school. Requiring every school to have a full time RN will place an unfunded mandate on many LHDs and school systems, especially in the setting of the COVID-worsened nursing shortage.

We encourage the legislature to work with the members of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future to design a comprehensive and practical plan for school-based health services. Such a plan should prioritize essential school health services including vision care and eyeglasses, behavioral health screening and therapy, optimizing asthma management, and general nursing care. A sustainably funded, unified plan that prioritizes essential healthcare building blocks would be preferable to isolated and financially unfeasible initiatives. A tiered strategy to sequentially expand on core healthcare measures should be mapped out. In addition, bridges between in-school services and community providers should be envisioned to achieve better outcomes and coordinate more specialized care for students in need.

For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers submits this letter of concern for SB 856. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at [rmaiora1@jhu.edu](mailto:rmaiora1@jhu.edu) or 410-937-1433. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*