



Senator Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Senator Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East Wing
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

January 29, 2022

Bill: Senate Bill 282 – Workgroup on Screening Related to Adverse Childhood Experiences

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, 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.

The purpose of this letter is to provide support for Senate Bill 282, which would establish a workgroup that will focus on screening for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). The workgroup will be charged with identifying screening tools in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Health, and make recommendations on creating strong links between screening and related services.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention define ACEs simply as potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood. Examples of ACEs include experiencing violence or abuse, witnessing violence in the home or community, having a family member attempt or die by suicide, exposure to substance abuse, and others. Exposure to ACEs is strongly correlated with many negative outcomes including chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance abuse in adulthood. Exposure can also negatively impact educational success and job opportunities. Importantly, early treatment for children related to ACEs can guard against many of these negative outcomes.

School psychologists are charged with providing frontline mental health support and treatment to Maryland's students. Unfortunately, we often know little about those students' past experiences, especially as they relate to trauma and ACEs. Unfortunately, many students who need mental health supports in schools do not receive treatment outside of the school building, therefore school psychologists are often the first line of support. Screening for childhood trauma, including ACEs, as well as ensuring access to early intervention can begin the process of mitigating potential negative outcomes for our students.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB 282. If we can provide any further information or be of assistance, please contact us at legislative@mSPAonline.org or Scott Tiffin at stiffin@policypartners.net or 443-350-1325.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Phipps, M.Ed., Ed.S., NCSP
Chair, Legislative Committee
Maryland School Psychologists' Association