



Delegate Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

January 14, 2022

Bill: House Bill 97 – Workgroup on Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, and Other Underrepresented Behavioral Health Professionals

Position: Support with Amendment

Dear Chairman Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, 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.

House Bill 97 addresses the underrepresentation of Black, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, and others in behavioral health professions. MSPA is in support of the development of this workgroup, and we are requesting to be added to the work group as a representative of the behavioral health professions. School psychologists are members of school teams who support mental and behavioral health in addition to learning and behavior. We partner with families, teachers, school communities, and others to create healthy, safe, supportive learning environments for all students. Every school in the state of Maryland has a school psychologist assigned to work with them. We are the most highly trained and qualified behavioral health professionals present within schools.

Unfortunately, there is significant underrepresentation of a variety of populations in school psychology, and a critical shortage of culturally and linguistically diverse school psychologists. Most school psychologists identify as white and provide monolingual services in English¹. However, our school-age population is rapidly increasing in culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. We know that support we need to improve in recruitment and retention of culturally and linguistically diverse school psychologists in order to adequately address these growing needs. The workgroup established under House Bill 97 would allow us to collaborate with other professionals and organizations in order to reduce this critical shortage and underrepresentation.

To address underrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse school psychologists, MSPA urges a favorable report with an amendment that our organization is added to the work group identified through House Bill 97. 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 or 443-350-1325.

Respectfully submitted,

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

¹National Association of School Psychologists. (2016). NASP Position Statement: Recruiting and retaining CLD graduate students.