



Mohammed Choudhury
 State Superintendent of Schools

BILL:	House Bill 657	DATE:	February 24, 2022
SUBJECT:	Public Schools – Standardized Behavioral Health Screenings for Students – Development and Implementation	COMMITTEE:	Ways and Means
POSITION:	Support with Amendments		
CONTACT:	Ary Amerikaner 410-767-0090 ary.amerikaner@maryland.gov		

EXPLANATION:

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) supports with amendments **House Bill (HB) 657 – Public Schools – Standardized Behavioral Health Screenings for Students – Development and Implementation**. This bill requires the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports to develop, in consultation with stakeholders, guidelines for developing a standardized behavioral health screening to identify students with behavioral health services needs.

Enhancing and expanding resources to address mental and behavioral health concerns for students is a primary focus of the Department, and MSDE believes that the Consortium is the appropriate entity to develop guidelines for the screening tool identified in this legislation that will aid in identifying student needs as early as possible and help to direct students to appropriate support services.

With that in mind, MSDE requests that the committee consider the following amendments:

1. Include language in the bill so that it addresses mental and behavioral health;
2. On page 32, lines 23-25, MSDE requests that the member selected to represent the Department not be limited to the Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services. MSDE proposes that the language read “ a representative of the Department, to be selected by the State Superintendent”
3. Add an additional member to the stakeholder group to be selected by MSDE, in consultation with the Maryland Department of Health, who is a mental health professional.

Mental health professionals, specifically school psychologists and school counselors, are expertly trained in understanding behavioral health screening procedures and best practices and will be vital partners in the effort to develop this screening tool for students.

House Bill 657 - *Public Schools – Standardized Behavioral Health Screenings for Students – Development and Implementation*
House Ways and Means Committee
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MSDE requests that during the proposal and consideration of legislation that representatives of the Department identified to serve in various capacities not be identified by specific divisions within MSDE but as a representative from the Department as a whole to ensure that MSDE can select the appropriate individual(s) to participate.

We respectfully request that you consider this information as you deliberate **HB 657**. Please contact Ary Amerikaner, at 410-767-0090, or ary.amerikaner@maryland.gov, for any additional information.