



Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair
Delegate Alonzo T. Washington, Vice Chair
Ways and Means Committee
Room 131 Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill: House Bill 657 – Public Schools - Standardized Behavioral Health Screenings for Students - Development and Implementation

Position: Support with Amendment

Dear Chairman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, 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 well-being of students and families across the state.

Although we agree with the importance of identifying children in need of behavioral health services, our schools are in significant need of more behavioral health providers. For example, there is currently one school psychologist for every 1,198 students in Maryland right now, based on America's School Mental Health Report Card published in February 2022. The recommended ratio from the National Association of School Psychologists is one school psychologist for every 500 students. Without more providers, it is unclear how schools will be able to evaluate the responses to the standardized behavioral health screening and follow up with students in need of services. This legislation would be most effective if paired with legislation to increase investment in school behavioral health services, such as *HB 1231 - Public Schools - Student Health Professional Retention Program – Established*.

Additionally, we recognize the importance of ensuring the consortium is getting various expert input when providing recommendations on the behavioral health screening. However, we believe it is essential to ensure that they also receive input from behavioral health providers. We suggest explicitly including school-based providers in the list of people the consortium must consult. We would recommend including a school psychologist, a social worker, and a school-based health center provider.

We ask for the following amendments that we believe helps clarify the bill:

On Page 2, Line 32 strike "GUIDELINES" and substitute "MODEL POLICY"

On Page 3, strike beginning with "GIVEN" in Line 2 through "SYSTEM" in Line 4 and substitute "PROVIDED TO PARENTS OR GUARDIANS BASED ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDED IN THE MODEL POLICY ESTABLISHED UNDER § 7-447.1 OF THIS ARTICLE"

On Page 3, strike beginning with "DEVELOP" in Line 9 through "NEEDS." And substitute: "A MODEL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SCREENING POLICY, WHICH SHALL INCLUDE:"



(A) GUIDELINES TO ASSIST BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES COORDINATOR TO DEVELOP THE STANDARDIZED SCREENING REQUIRED UNDER § 7-447 OF THIS ARTICLE;
(B) RECOMMENDATIONS ON IMPLEMENTING THE STANDARDIZED SCREENING; AND
(C) RECOMMENDATIONS ON BEST PRACTICES FOR FOLLOW UP ON BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NEEDS REPORTED ON THE STANDARDIZED SCREENING."

On Page 4, Line 2 strike "AND" and insert:

"8. ONE MEMBER OF THE MARYLAND SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS' ASSOCIATION;

9. ONE MEMBER OF THE MARYLAND CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

10. ONE MEMBER OF THE MARYLAND ASSEMBLY OF SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CARE

11. ONE MEMBER OF THE MARYLAND SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION"

One Page 4, Line 3, strike "9" and substitute "12"

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