



Maryland Occupational Therapy Association

PO Box 36401, Towson, Maryland 21286 ♦ motamembers.org

Committee:	House Ways and Means Committee
Bill:	House Bill 1231 – Public Schools - Student Health Professional Retention Program - Established
Hearing Date:	March 8, 2022
Position:	Support with Amendment

The Maryland Occupational Therapy Association (MOTA) supports *House Bill 1231 – Public Schools - Student Health Professional Retention Program – Established*. This bill addresses ongoing shortages in school-based health providers.

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future, recognized the importance of addressing teacher shortages and ensuring that all students have access to highly qualified teachers. To help the state achieve these goals the Blueprint created the “Career Ladder for Educators.” This program created a minimum teacher salary and created a tiered salary system to incentivize educators to achieve advanced education and credentials. MOTA strongly supported the Blueprint, including the teacher career ladder. However, we believe that there should be an extension to the Blueprint to help address shortages of school health providers.

Occupational therapists (OTs) and occupational therapy assistants (OTAs) provide important services to students that help ensure that all students are able to receive a high-quality education. Similar to how OTs and OTAs work with patients to address barriers to completing activities of daily living, we help many students address barriers to classroom participation and completing classroom activities. Without OTs and OTAs many students would not be able to be educated even with the most highly qualified educators. Currently, school systems are having difficulty hiring and retaining OTs and OTAs because the salaries in our school system are not keeping up with salaries in private practice or other healthcare settings. Passing HB 1231 would help attract and retain high quality OTs and OTAs so that all Maryland students are able to access a high-quality education. We also look forward to the work associated with the study required by the bill to assess options to extend the bill. We believe there are credentials that could be used to allow OTs and OTAs to move up the career ladder.

We do ask for one potential amendment to ensure that inclusion of occupational therapy assistants:
On Page 2, after line 18 insert “(7) AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT”

Thank you for your attention to this important bill. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Scott Tiffin at stiffin@policypartners.net or (443) 350-1325.