

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the Maryland Senate
Ways and Means Committee - For the Hearing on
Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program - Mental Health Professionals in Public Schools (SB482)
February 22, 2023
SUPPORT**

Free State PTA represents over 50,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. Free State PTA is composed of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. As the state's premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. ***Senate Bill 482 , Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program - Mental Health Professionals in Public Schools, aligns with Free State PTA's legislative priority on mental health support for school communities.***

This bill includes assisting in the repayment of loans for mental health professionals serving as school psychologists, resource psychologists, psychologist coordinators, social workers, social worker supervisors, or mental health coordinators in the public schools.

Free State PTA included the mental health of children as our top priority this year in our Legislative Agenda because our membership shared with us that there is an overwhelming need to address this issue. We support the national associations' recommended staff to student ratios of social workers, psychologists and counselors that provide support to students. Maryland has not met these ratios.¹

There are many factors affecting the mental health crisis. The Covid-19 closures² and the readjustment to in person schools added to student and family stress. Social media has also added to the stress our children face every day. We have seen increased drug overdose³ and suicide⁴, especially in marginalized groups and girls.

It is recognized that we need more health professionals in schools, but it is difficult to fill these positions. As an example Montgomery County took a year to hire newly funded social workers, and MCPS careers shows 11 openings for psychologists today but only one in the pool. We have been consistently short of psychologists⁵ for years. Any incentive to fill and expand the number of mental health professional positions are needed. we could literally save lives. **Therefore, the Free State PTA urges the passage of SB482.**

Testimony is presented on the behalf of

Marla Posey-Moss

¹<https://marylandeducators.org/behavioral-health-expansion/#:~:text=The%20American%20School%20Counselor%20Association,current%20ratio%20is%20327%3A1.>

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8657359/>

³ <https://www.uclahealth.org/news/adolescent-drug-overdose-deaths-rose-exponentially-first>

⁴ <https://jedfoundation.org/mental-health-and-suicide-statistics/>

⁵ <https://www.nasponline.org/research-and-policy/policy-priorities/critical-policy-issues/shortage-of-school-psychologists>



Free State PTA
5730 Cottonwood Ave Box 20924
Baltimore, Maryland 21209
Phone: (410) 446-1549
www.fspta.org

Marla Posey-Moss, President
mposey-moss@fspta.org