



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Jessica Fitzwater
County Executive

SB 0482 - Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program - Mental Health Professionals in Public Schools

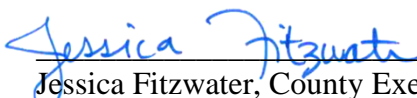
DATE: February 22, 2023
COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
POSITION: Favorable
FROM: The Office of Frederick County Executive Jessica Fitzwater

As the County Executive of Frederick County, I urge the committee to give SB 0482 - Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program - Mental Health Professionals in Public Schools a favorable report. This bill will expand the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program to include mental health professionals serving as school psychologists, resource psychologists, psychologist coordinators, social workers, social worker supervisors, or mental health coordinators in our public schools.

My experience as a teacher in Frederick County Public Schools showed me the importance of mental health services in our schools. Now, as the Frederick County Executive, I am working hard with healthcare leaders in the County and across the state to address the shortage of mental health professionals in our community. Expanding the loan repayment program to mental health professionals serving within our schools will help our schools improve recruitment and retention, ensuring our students have access to the mental health experts they need.

Frederick County, like communities across the country, has faced challenges in meeting the demand for health care services during and after the pandemic. In fact, the federal government has designated areas of Frederick County as Health Professional Shortage Areas in mental health.¹ Recent research from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention indicates that youth mental health continues to steadily decline. Their 2022 report “Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary and Trends Report: 2011 – 2021” identifies schools as the best setting for early intervention.² Investing in community-based sources of care within our schools will not only improve outcomes for our students but will provide needed support to our educators.

SB 0482 is a commonsense change that will help support the dedicate mental health providers who play a critical role in the wellbeing of our students and community. Thank you for your consideration of SB 0482. I urge the committee to give this bill a favorable report.



Jessica Fitzwater, County Executive
Frederick County, MD

¹ [HPSA Find \(hrsa.gov\)](https://www.hrsa.gov/hpsa/)

² [Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report: 2011-2021 \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/youthrisk/)