



**2023 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

- BILL:** **SB 419 – Nonpublic Schools – School Health Services Program – Eligibility for Participation**
- COMMITTEE:** **Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee**
- POSITION:** **Letter of Concern**
- BILL ANALYSIS:** **SB 419 would alter the requirements of the school health services program to allow participation by certain nonpublic schools; prohibit a county board of education from expending more than \$40 per student, adjusted for inflation, to provide school health services to students in certain nonpublic schools; prohibit a county board from providing adequate school health services in nonpublic schools that discriminate in certain ways; and require the Governor to provide \$4,000,000 in the annual budget bill starting in fiscal year 2025 for the program**

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) supports the intent of SB 419 to expand school health services to more students by authorizing certain non-public schools to participate. However, MACHO is concerned about the insufficient funding resources proposed for this legislation and the impact it will have on the capacity of the local health departments and the local school systems who provide school health services, including the overtaxed and understaffed school nurse workforce.

While SB 419 requires providing \$4,000,000 in the annual budget, this funding is inadequate to implement school health services in non-public schools. In 2023, there are approximately 800 private schools in the State of Maryland, serving 141,000 students, which is 14% of Maryland’s K-12 students. At a cap of \$40 per student, this legislation would require 41% more funding or \$5,640,000 if each private school student was supported. Furthermore, a cap of \$40 per student does not support the real costs at a school. For instance, a non-public school with 400 students, receiving \$40 per student, would only receive \$16,000 which is woefully insufficient to cover staffing or operational costs. Additional funding would also be needed to expand staffing at the Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland State Department of Education who would be needed to provide technical assistance and coordination to non-public schools.

In addition to funding concerns, there is a well-documented national and statewide nursing workforce crisis that will affect this legislation. In Maryland, a [2022 report](#) shows the current nursing shortage is worsening, with an estimated shortage of 5000 RNs and 4000 LPNs. School health services are delivered through a mix of health assistants and nurses (RN and LPNs) who cover one or multiple schools, plus supervisory staff who provide administrative, clinical coordination and oversight. Many local health departments have difficulty hiring and retaining these staff. The addition of certain non-public schools will significantly add to the number of students and school sites that school health personnel and administrative staff would need to cover with such an expansion.

For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers urges the committee to consider these concerns for SB 419. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433.