
MARYLAND COALITION TO REFORM SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

WAYS AND MEANS SENATE BILL 0482: JANET L. HOFFMAN LOAN ASSISTANCE REPAYMENT PROGRAM- - Mental Health Professionals in Public Schools

February 22, 2023

POSITION: Support

The Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline (CRSD) brings together advocates, service providers, and community members dedicated to transforming school discipline practices within Maryland's public school systems. To this end, CRSD advocates for the expansion of proactive measures to improve school climate and expand the equitable delivery of school mental health services and student behavioral supports. **CRSD SUPPORTS Senate Bill 0482, which would expand the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program to include 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; and requiring the Office of Student Financial Assistance to publicize the Program to eligible mental health professionals to help recruit and retain mental health professionals in the public schools.

The Coalition to Reform School Discipline (CRSD) supports SB0482 for the following reasons:

- **Maryland is experiencing a substantial increase in student mental health needs.** Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, 143,000 children in the State of Maryland developed anxiety and/or depression¹. Approximately 53 million individuals met the diagnostic criteria for a mental illness in 2020 (SAMHSA²). Unaddressed mental health needs negatively impact school culture and climate and student outcomes.
- **There is a critical shortage of mental health professionals.** Districts statewide are unable to recruit and hire enough qualified mental health professionals to do this critical work. Baltimore City School social workers are currently overwhelmed as reflected by the 1 to 362 ratio, only 44.8% of the recommended number.³
- **Lack of diverse providers that reflect student populations:** 63% of all new social workers are white and financial challenges disproportionately impact minorities and

¹ <https://www.wypr.org/wypr-news/2022-10-25/heres-what-baltimores-public-schools-are-doing-to-combat-a-mental-health-crisis>

² <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-105250>

³ <https://www.wypr.org/wypr-news/2022-10-25/heres-what-baltimores-public-schools-are-doing-to-combat-a-mental-health-crisis>

people of color⁴. This bill would directly address these financial challenges to promote equity of access to advanced degrees and certification needed by mental health providers.

- **Difficult to retain qualified (and diverse) providers.** Exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the “Great Resignation” schools are struggling to hire and retain employees due to non-competitive pay. This bill would address this challenge, also creating a pipeline of veteran providers to mentor younger clinicians.
- **Critical compliment to the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future.** One of the Blueprint’s major focuses is to expand mental health services (Pillar 4). The Blueprint establishes teacher and administrator pipelines, to address competitive pay concerns. This bill incentivizes mental health providers to enter and remain in the school setting

For these reasons, CRSD supports Senate Bill 0482.

For more information contact:

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⁴ <https://www.socialworkers.org/News/News-Releases/ID/2262/New-Report-Provides-Insights-into-New-Social-Workers-Demographics-Income-and-Job-Satisfaction>

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CRSD Members

ACLU of Maryland

The Choice Program at UMBC

Center for Dispute Resolution, Univ. of Maryland Law School

Center for Hope

Sayra and Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families, Children and the Courts (CFCC)

Disability Rights Maryland

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Public Justice Center

Positive Schools Center, University of Maryland School of Social Work

Project HEAL at the Kennedy Krieger Institute

League of Women Voters Maryland

Youth, Education, and Justice Clinic, University of Maryland Carey School of Law

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