



February 28, 2023

Bill: Senate Bill 791– Primary and Secondary Education - Public School Employees - Job Duties and Salaries

Position: Support with Amendment

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA), a professional organization representing about 500 school psychologists in Maryland. We advocate for the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic wellbeing of students and families across the state.

Senate Bill 791 mandates salary increases for qualified educators with a high-quality educator credential that has been jointly approved by the state board and the professional standards and teacher education board. Additionally, it increases salary for educators who are assigned to a low-performing school while maintaining national credentials.

There is currently a critical shortage of school psychologists in Maryland's public schools. The National Association of School Psychologists recommends a 1:500 ratio of school psychologists to students, and currently no county in Maryland meets that threshold, with many counties operating at double, triple, or quadruple the recommended ratio. Additionally, new research and data indicate that the mental and behavioral health needs of students are increasing, with almost 3 out of 5 adolescent girls reporting feelings of persistent sadness, and increases in suicide attempts of adolescents. Currently, school psychologists are operating at a critical shortage trying to meet the ever-increasing needs of Maryland's students. School psychologists across the state are experiencing burnout as a result of high caseloads and lack of support. For these reasons, MSPA is in support of salary increases for recruitment and retention of school psychologists across Maryland.

Many school psychologists in Maryland are Nationally Certified School Psychologists (NCSP). It is not required to maintain a national credential to practice in Maryland. These psychologists go above and beyond to meet these rigorous standards. Members who obtain this standard must complete 60 graduate semester hours minimum in a school psychology program, successfully complete a 1,200 clock hour supervised internship, build a portfolio demonstrating competencies in the domains of professional practice, and pass the School Psychology Praxis exam. Additionally, to maintain the credential, every three years school psychologists must log 75 hours of continuous professional development, including legal and ethical practice, cultural responsiveness training, and at least 10 hours from the National Association of School Psychologists approved providers.

Due to the rigorous nature of gaining and maintaining the NCSP credential, MSPA proposes an amendment to specify that the NCSP is a high-quality educator credential eligible for the mandated salary increases. We know that school psychologists are desperately needed in Maryland's schools. We urge the committee to assist us in prioritizing the recruitment and retention of school psychologists.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report. If we can provide any further information or be of assistance, please contact us at legislative@mSPAonline.org or Sarah Peters at speters@hbstrategies.us or 410-322-2320.

Respectfully submitted,

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Committee Chair, Legislative Committee
Maryland School Psychologists' Association.