



Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair  
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 25, 2023

**Bill: Senate Bill 938 – Primary and Secondary Education – School Safety and Student Well-Being – Examination of Policies**

**Position: Support**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, 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. School psychologists provide comprehensive psychological services to Maryland's students, including counseling, consultation and assessment. We are writing in support of SB 938, which brings a welcome emphasis on conflict resolution as an essential element in school safety.

The Maryland Center for School Safety is charged with providing a coordinated and comprehensive policy for school safety in Maryland, and with providing resources and guidance to local systems on school safety. Much of its focus to this point has been on the physical aspects of school safety, and the center is widely seen as helpful and effective in this area. SB 938 expands the mission of the Center to include a focus on student dispute resolution through mediation, recognizing that school safety can be substantially enhanced if students learn that they have non-violent means of resolving interpersonal difficulties available to them. Research shows that programs of mediation and instruction in conflict resolution can reduce the prevalence of disruption and fighting and reduce suspensions and expulsions. Properly implemented, these programs have been shown to have a beneficial effect in the broader school community as well. These methods are already being implemented in some Maryland schools, with positive results, and SB 938 will help our schools to extend and to expand these efforts.

MSPA urges you to favorably report on SB 938, to help Maryland's school develop and implement effective conflict resolution procedures. If we can provide any further information or be of assistance, please contact us at [legislative@mSPAonline.org](mailto:legislative@mSPAonline.org) or Sarah Peters at [speters@hbstrategies.us](mailto:speters@hbstrategies.us) or 410-322-2320.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Phipps, M.Ed., Ed.S., NCSP  
Committee Chair, Legislative Committee  
Maryland School Psychologists' Association.