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Maryland Medical Assistance and Children's Health Insurance Programs - School-Based  
Behavioral Health Services - Reimbursement

Senate Committee on Finance  
February 7, 2023  
1:00pm

**The Baltimore Teachers Union supports Senate Bill 201**, which would require the Maryland Department of Health to apply to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for a State plan amendment authorizing certain reimbursement of behavioral health services when provided in a school setting by certain health care providers under the Maryland Medical Assistance Program or the Maryland Children's Health Insurance Program.

The Baltimore Teachers Union represents 8,280 teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, clinicians, librarians, secretaries, community school site specialists, bus transportation aides, and many more school-based and central office support staff. We are 4 out of 5 workers in Baltimore City Public Schools, serving 75,595 students and their families. Our national union, the American Federation of Teachers, has over 1.7 million members in the United States and its territories.

Almost a decade ago, in 2014, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued guidance to state Medicaid directors that clarified which services can be reimbursed by Medicaid in a school-based setting. This guidance allows school districts to expand their school-based Medicaid programs to cover more students and bring in additional federal funding.

Since 2014, LEA's like the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) have been forced to leave potentially millions of dollars in funding on the table because Maryland state law currently limits school districts to billing only for school health services included in a student's IEP. The Baltimore Teachers Union currently represents 202 school social workers, 147 school counselors, 124 school psychologists, 113 speech language pathologists, and 51 occupational therapists and/or physical therapists. These clinical professionals provide a comprehensive continuum of services that support students both with and without identified disabilities and IEPs.

Along that comprehensive continuum are preventative services that are designed to provide students with the boost of extra support that, in some cases, prevents them from needing to be identified for an IEP. School-based clinical professionals are a key provider of early intervention services. We provide these services to thousands of students within schools every day, but our LEAs are unable to seek reimbursement for these services in the same way as our colleagues working in private practices or hospitals. Altering Maryland law so that Medicaid could be billed for services provided to non-IEP students would open up potential funding streams that could greatly expand the number of clinicians working in LEAs, but also provide for increased professional development opportunities and allow LEAs and clinicians to purchase materials that enhance our services.

The Baltimore Teachers union urges Maryland lawmakers to address this problem this session. SB201 will enable school districts to draw down additional Medicaid funding for school health services to expand access to school-based health services. This change will have an impact across Maryland, but in historically underfunded LEAs like BCPSS it could be a transformational opportunity.

**BTU urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 201.**