



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND  
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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**Senate Bill 201**  
**Maryland Medical Assistance and Children's Health Insurance Programs-School Based Behavioral Health Services-Reimbursement**  
**Senate Finance Committee - February 7, 2023**  
**SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2023 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic clubs in our county with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials.

**WDC urges the passage of SB0201** to increase the availability and funding for school-based behavioral health services. This bill will require the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to apply for a state plan amendment to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) that would authorize expanded reimbursement to providers of behavioral health services when provided in a school setting.

According to a study in *Journal of the American Medical Association*<sup>1</sup>, one in six youth have a mental health condition like anxiety or depression but only half receive any mental health services. Children spend considerable time in educational settings and their schools offer a unique opportunity for timely identification, prevention, and interventions that serve students where they already are, especially in under-served communities.

Another recent study bolsters the case for better mental health service access in school-based settings. This study, reported by the *American School Health Association*<sup>2</sup>, found that students accessing mental health services at School Based Health Centers returned for follow up visits at significantly higher rates than students only seeing primary care providers. The study concludes is that School Based Health Centers represent a valuable resource for more integrated mental health services.

In 2014, CMS expanded the use of Medicaid to pay for school health services for all Medicaid-enrolled students. ***Eighteen (18) states have undertaken the necessary steps, as of December 2021, to align their state Medicaid plan with federal policy to access these funds. Maryland has not yet done so.*** This bill will ensure that Maryland joins these other states to fully access Medicaid funding for mental health services for Maryland's students.

**We ask for your support for SB0201 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.**

Diana E. Conway  
WDC President

Cynthia Rubenstein  
WDC Advocacy Committee

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<sup>1</sup> Whitney DG, Peterson MD. US National and State-Level Prevalence of Mental Health Disorders and Disparities of Mental Health Care Use in Children. *JAMA Pediatr.* 2019;173(4):389-391. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2018.5399

<sup>2</sup> Stempel H, Cox-Martin MG, O'Leary S, Stein R, Allison MA. Students Seeking Mental Health Services at School-Based Health Centers: Characteristics and Utilization Patterns. *J Sch Health.* 2019 Oct;89(10):839-846. doi: 10.1111/josh.12823. Epub 2019 Jul 30. PMID: 31359431.