



Bill: House Bill 82 - Maryland Medical Assistance and Children's Health Insurance Programs - School-Based Behavioral Health Services - Reimbursement

Position: Support with Amendments

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, 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.

We support the authorization of school psychologists as eligible providers for services reimbursable to local education agencies for Medicaid-eligible students. School psychologists provide essential services including psychological assessment and counseling to many of Maryland's most vulnerable students. Adding school psychologists to the list of eligible providers will increase the amount of funding received by local school systems in Maryland, and this funding can be used to support school psychological services in Maryland. This change will also align Maryland with **34 other states and the District of Columbia** currently being reimbursed for services provided by school psychologists in public schools.

Currently, Maryland Medicaid rules regarding reimbursement for school psychological services leave **millions of federal dollars** on the table. The majority of other states are taking advantage of these federal dollars by allowing their local school systems to be reimbursed for these services provided to students covered by Medicaid, including when these services are provided by school psychologists and other providers certified by their respective departments of education. To address some of the opposition to this bill:

1. MDH indicates that certificated staff, like school psychologists, are not eligible providers. This is solely because Maryland's Medicaid rules as written are outdated and not in alignment with federal guidance - 35 other states and the District of Columbia are taking advantage of this reimbursement and **include school psychologists as eligible providers. MDH is foregoing this federal reimbursement because they keep with outdated and incorrect rules.**
2. Community-based providers are concerned about personnel shortages. These additional funds would be provided to schools for services that **are already being provided.** There will be a net positive effect of these funds on both school-employed staff shortages and school-community partnerships, which do not work without the appropriate level of support from school psychologists, school counselors, and school social workers. Additionally, school-employed providers are required to have very specific credentials, which community-based providers do not hold. The idea of community-based providers leaving their practices for school-based jobs is not possible on a large scale because of this credentialing barrier.
3. You will hear that schools will need to spend money to implement these changes. School systems **already have Medicaid reimbursement infrastructure in place**, through which they are reimbursed for other services, such as physical and occupational therapies and speech-language therapy. The demands on LEAs to implement this additional programming are quite minimal.



PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

1. We look forward to working with the bill sponsors and committee members to direct the funding generated by this new reimbursement to the recruitment and retention of school psychologists across Maryland through salary increases as well as improving school-community partnerships. We propose that increased federal funding be earmarked for salary increases aligned to the Blueprint for Maryland's Future for educators, including \$10,000 for Nationally Certified School Psychologists, an additional \$2,000 for doctoral level psychologists, and an additional \$7,000 for psychologists who maintain their national certification and are employed in a designated low-performing school. The purpose of the funding would be to incentivize school psychologists to remain in Maryland public schools, recruit qualified personnel from other states, and address the shortages across the state. The National Association of School Psychologists recommends a ratio of 1:500 school psychologists. Currently, there is a 1:1198 ratio of school psychologists to students, over double the current recommended ratio.
2. Include language in the bill that these additional funds are supplemental to and are not intended to replace existing funds.

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,

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

Status of School Psychologists** as Qualified Providers of School Based Medicaid Services

**States highlighted issue a license to school psychologist

| Specialist Level School Psychologists ARE Eligible | Specialist Level School Psychologists are NOT Eligible |
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| Alabama | Arizona |
| Alaska | Arkansas |
| California | Georgia |
| Connecticut | Maine |
| Delaware | Maryland |
| District of Columbia | Nebraska |
| Florida | Nevada |
| Idaho | New York |
| Illinois | North Dakota |
| Indiana | Oregon |
| Iowa | Rhode Island |
| Kansas | Tennessee |
| Kentucky | Vermont |
| Louisiana | |
| Massachusetts | |
| Michigan | |
| Minnesota | |
| Mississippi | |
| Missouri | |
| Montana | |
| New Hampshire* | |
| New Jersey | |
| New Mexico | |
| North Carolina | |
| Ohio | |
| Oklahoma | |
| Pennsylvania | |
| South Carolina | |
| South Dakota | |
| Texas | |
| Utah | |
| Virginia* | |
| Washington | |
| West Virginia | |
| Wisconsin | |
| Wyoming | |
| *Must obtain license from Board of Psychology. Only requirement to obtain license is credential from Department of Education | |