



Senate Bill 201

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

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Finance Committee

Date: February 7, 2023

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 201. This bill would require Maryland to apply to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for a State plan amendment authorizing reimbursement of behavioral health services provided in Maryland schools for students on these insurance plans.

At a time when our students are struggling with mental health as they return to classrooms post-pandemic and as our schools struggle to hire and retain qualified staff, SB 201 poses a solution to both challenges. This bill would advance a process for critical mental and behavioral school services to potential reimbursement from the Maryland Medical Assistance and the Maryland Children's Health Insurance Programs.

In doing so, Maryland would help ensure the state's most vulnerable low-income students will be better supported and that the school staff who care for them will be better resourced to do so. This expanded opportunity for reimbursement under SB 201 would directly translate to increased funding for the school offices and programs providing mental and behavioral health services for students – and that, in-turn, helps those programs better support all Maryland public school students, regardless of their family's socio-economic status.

At the same time, increased resources will take some of the stress and pressure off the school staff serving our students, whom we all agree are stretched beyond ideal capacity. Additional reimbursement for services could mean hiring new healthcare staff in schools, expanding programs, and extending services.

Counties remain committed to supporting all students and the school professionals working with them. As such, counties view SB 201 as another valuable tool in the toolbox to do so, and, accordingly, MACo requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 201.