

## **HB961 STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST RECRUITMENT PROGRAM**

February 27, 2023  
Ways and Means Committee

### **SUPPORT**

Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) supports **HB961 State Department of Education - School Psychologist Recruitment Program**.

This bill establishes the School Psychologist Recruitment Program within MSDE to support school systems in the State of Maryland to recruit, hire, and retain well-trained school psychologists. It also requires the Program to provide professional development programs and aid for a certain certification fee to school psychologists and individuals seeking to become school psychologists and to reimburse school psychologists for professional conference expenses.

The *Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services* (also known as the NASP Practice Model) represents the official policy of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) regarding the delivery of comprehensive, integrated school psychological services. The model addresses the delivery of school psychological services within the context of educational programs and educational settings. The model describes the responsibilities of individual school psychologists and the responsibilities of school systems to support comprehensive school psychological services. The model promotes a high level of student and systems-level services to meet the academic, social, behavioral, mental health, and emotional needs of all children and youth. The model advocates for the delivery of comprehensive school psychological services to schools, students, and their families across ten domains of practice. The ratio of school psychologists to students is a critical aspect of providing high-quality, comprehensive services and should not exceed one school psychologist for every 500 students. In some situations, the school psychologist-to-student ratio may need to be lower. These include, but are not limited to, situations in which school psychologists are assigned to work primarily with student populations that have intensive special needs (e.g., students with significant emotional or behavioral disorders, or students with developmental disorders) or within communities that are disproportionately affected by poverty, trauma, and environmental stressors. Lower ratios may also be required when school psychologists are itinerant, recognizing the demands inherent in traveling from school to school and in developing and maintaining collaborative relationships in multiple sites.

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HCPS recognizes the importance of promoting a robust system of school psychologist recruitment, preparation, and retention so that our students have access to critical mental health supports to enable them to reach academic, social and developmental benchmarks and be ready for college and/or career success. Student mental health is of particular importance during this time when HCPS students are recovering from a global health pandemic and other challenges. School psychologists collaborate with staff, parents/guardians, and the community to help students overcome barriers to learning. The emphasis on multi-tiered systems of support, which also include Section 504 accommodations and restorative practices, further supports this effort and HCPS' Strategic Plan by emphasizing relationships, rigor, and readiness for all students. By removing barriers, providing resources, and teaching appropriate social-emotional skills, school psychologists help students gain the necessary tools to be productive citizens.

The competition for available school psychology candidates each year has become fierce, and school districts are having to become very creative in finding ways to attract interns and school psychology candidates when they are in short supply and highly desired. Competition has also been felt by the surge of private vendors who are getting into the school psychology recruitment business and offering candidates to school districts at greatly inflated prices. School psychology is currently a critical shortage area and local school systems would certainly benefit from a Statewide recruitment effort. For these reasons, we support HB961.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Bulson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Sean Bulson, Superintendent, Harford County Public Schools