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February 5, 2023

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Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair
Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building, Room 131
Annapolis, MD 21401

House Bill 265 - Public Schools - Standardized Behavioral Health Questionnaire for Students - Development and Implementation

Position: Support with Amendment

Dear Chairman Atterbeary, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state, is writing to express **SUPPORT with an amendment** for **House Bill 265 - Public Schools - Standardized Behavioral Health Questionnaire for Students - Development and Implementation**, which would serve to implement the admirable goal of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future that public school students receive regular behavioral health screenings, followed by appropriate follow-up referral when indicated.

Addressing the behavioral health needs of Maryland's school children is an essential role for our public schools – students perform better academically, and grow up to be better-functioning adults, when these needs are met along the way. However, it is important that the screening instruments and questionnaires employed in this process be both reliable and valid – and this critical issue is not addressed in HB 265. While the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports is charged with developing guidelines for developing a standardized questionnaire to identify students with behavioral health service needs, the stakeholder group identified in the bill does not include any behavioral health professionals, nor anyone with expertise in developing such instruments for use with students. Many licensed psychologists who conduct assessments of children and youth possess these qualifications. We therefore request that a licensed psychologist, specifically a member of the Maryland Psychological Association, be included in the stakeholder group.

With the addition of a licensed psychologist to the stakeholder group, House Bill 265 can assist Maryland's public schools in developing a comprehensive system for identifying and addressing the behavioral health needs of our students. We urge that this important legislation be amended to include an MPA member, and that the **amended bill receive a favorable report**.

Thank you for considering our comments on HB 265. If we can be of any further assistance as the House – Ways and Means Committee considers this bill, please do not hesitate to contact MPA's Legislative Chair, Dr. Pat Savage at mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Resnik, Psy.D.

Rebecca Resnick, Psy.D.
President

R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.

R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs