



**Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director**  
1217 S. Potomac Street  
Baltimore, MD 21224  
410-935-7281  
marypat.fannon@pssam.org

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**BILL:** HB 265

**TITLE:** Public Schools - Standardized Behavioral Health Questionnaire for Students - Development and Implementation

**DATE:** February 8, 2023

**POSITION:** Oppose

**COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means

**CONTACT:** Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

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The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four local school superintendents, **opposes** House Bill 265.

House Bill 265 requires that the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports develop, in consultation with certain stakeholders, guidelines for developing a standardized behavioral health questionnaire to identify students with need for behavioral health services. This bill also requires each behavioral health service coordinator to develop and implement a standardized behavioral health questionnaire based on the guidelines developed by the Consortium, as well as mandates distribution of the questionnaire to the parent or guardian in certain circumstances.

PSSAM has concerns about the implementation of this bill, specifically its effect on the ongoing work being accomplished by The Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports (CCCS). CCCS has several statutory purposes and responsibilities as outlined in the Blueprint legislation, and is composed of specific appointees with expertise in the relevant fields.

One of the statutory purposes of CCCS is to provide expertise in developing best practices in the delivery of behavioral health and wraparound services. At present time, the Consortium has developed a Best Practices subcommittee, co-chaired by Dr. Derek Simmons, current superintendent of Caroline County Public Schools, and Dr. John Campo, chair of child and adolescent psychiatry at Johns Hopkins. This committee also includes the co-directors of the National Center for School Mental Health. We are concerned that this bill circumvents the statutory authority and the role of the Consortium.

Additionally, while the intent of this legislation is to identify student populations with mental health needs, the importance of implementing and maintaining systemic processes to serve these populations identified by the questionnaire cannot be understated. Currently, there is a critical shortage of child and adolescent clinicians both in the school setting and in communities. Without a structure in place to support the growth and development of community behavioral health, as well as school-based behavioral health, the bill's prescriptive language will contribute to the already expansive waitlists that disservice many of our young people presently in need of services.

The Consortium is currently working to finalize their framework, as well as other components to begin the RFP process to support the expansion of community and school-based services. Maryland's superintendents ask that you let the work of the Consortium, as designed, move forward without interference by this bill. The Consortium as a whole, in conjunction with representative content area experts, functions to be inclusive of a system to improve behavioral health outcomes for all of our students.

For these reasons, PSSAM **opposes** House Bill 265 and requests an unfavorable report.