



**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate,
Finance Committee
February 28, 2023**

**Board of Education
of Howard County**

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**SB0628: FAVORABLE
School-Based Health Centers - Services, Infrastructure, and Funding**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **SB0628 School - Based Health Centers - Services, Infrastructure, and Funding** for its elevation of funding and infrastructure needs of school-based health centers.

Beginning January 1, 2024, a new provision of the Health - General Article would require the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to provide financial coverage for sports physicals performed by school-based health centers, subject to limitations of the State budget. Additionally, SB0628 sets out requirements for the Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland State Department of Education to add information, including estimated costs, regarding the infrastructure needed for school-based health centers to join the federal vaccines for children program to existing guidelines to support the expansion of school-based health centers. Lastly, the bill calls for the development of a funding allocation formula that addresses needs of existing centers and expansion, and by January 1, 2024, the development of a budget proposal to provide sufficient funding to establish at least one school-based health center in each Maryland county.

As a legislative platform, the Board is unequivocally committed to nurturing the physical, social, and emotional needs of students, however, this expanded role of the public school system needs to be met with sufficient funds as well as collaborative partnerships where health department or other expertise can inform school practices. The Board and the Howard County Public School System's (HCPSS) Health Services staff supports SB0628 for the potential additional financial coverage the bill sets up to supplement local funds for school-based health centers.

In Howard County, HCPSS currently operates 11 school-based wellness centers in conjunction with the [Howard County Health Department](#). Health centers provide both sports and full physicals for students with medical assistance. Guidelines and assistance regarding infrastructure to allow these centers to become official sites for children vaccine programs as outlined in the bill would be welcome as the County struggles to gain approval, which currently makes transporting vaccines difficult. While no direct funding is required under the bill, the anticipation of a funding allocation proposal would move the needle forward in realizing the impact school-based health centers have on students and the surrounding local community.

For these reasons, we urge a FAVORABLE report of SB0628 from this Committee.