



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

February 25, 2023

Bill: House Bill 1219 - Maryland Educator Shortage Act of 2023

Position: Support with Amendment

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

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA), a professional organization representing about 500 school psychologists in Maryland. We advocate for the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic wellbeing of students and families across the state.

We support the goals of House Bill 1219 to address the critical shortage of teachers in the state of Maryland. However, **we would like to expand the definition of “educator” to also include “school psychologist”**. Teachers are already tasked with high caseloads and significant demands. School psychologists can help to provide the essential support that students need to reduce the burden on teachers, and they can help ensure that every student comes to school able to access education. The critical shortage of school psychologists must be met concurrently with the critical shortage of teachers.

The National Association of School Psychologists recommends a 1:500 ratio of school psychologists to students, and currently no county in Maryland meets that threshold, with many counties operating at double, triple, or quadruple the recommended ratio. School psychologists provide essential services including assessment, threat assessments, suicide risk assessments, direct services, preventative and responsive interventions, and consultation with school staff, and families and the community. Currently, school psychologists unable to adequately meet the ever-increasing needs of Maryland's students. School psychologists across the state are experiencing burnout as a result of high caseloads and lack of support.

MSPA proposes amendments to expand HB1219 to establish specific goals for the recruitment and retention of school psychologists in school psychologist preparation programs throughout the state, add students pursuing school psychology to the “Grow Our Own Educators Scholarship Program”, and add school psychology interns to the “Educator Internship Stipend Program”, in order to address the shortage of school psychologists concurrently with the shortage of teachers.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB1219 with amendments to include school psychologists. If we can provide any further information or be of assistance, please contact us at legislative@mSPAonline.org or Sarah Peters at speters@hbstrategies.us or 410-322-2320.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Phipps, M.Ed., Ed.S., NCSP
Committee Chair Legislative Committee