



Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair  
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 27, 2024

**Bill: Senate Bill 492 – Student Telehealth Appointments**

**Position: Support with Amendment**

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, 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. School psychologists provide comprehensive psychological services to children in Maryland's schools, including counseling, consultation and assessment. We are writing in support, with a significant amendment, for SB 492, concerning student telehealth appointments during the school day.

Properly managed, telehealth appointments for Maryland students could enhance their physical and mental health, and we support the concept in principle. But as written there are significant issues which are raised by this bill, including student safety and clinical well-being, as well as challenging logistical and staff demands on our public schools:

- There is no connection between the outside treatment provider and the school. This could result in a student being left in crisis at the end of a session due to whatever happened in the session, with no supports or follow-up built in.
- The advocates for the bill speak of credentialed therapists doing these telehealth sessions, but there is nothing in the bill that speaks to the kind of providers the students and their parents are connecting to – who knows what qualifications they might (or might not) have, and whether they have any regulation or State oversight at all.
- And there is no way to ensure background checks for the people the students are connecting to – an important requirement for any contact with kids in schools. Legally any person who connects with a student in school must have passed a background check.
- When community-based providers come into our schools, it is with a "Memorandum of Understanding" spelling out all of the steps in the process, including referral, scheduling, and collaboration between provider and school personnel. None of this would be in place with a "drop-in" telehealth provider.
- Space is at a premium in many schools, and this is going to be very challenging for schools to manage – next to impossible in some very over-crowded schools.
- Staff time is involved in both getting the student to the designated space, and supervising them there – school support and administrative staff are stretched very thin already.

- Scheduling coordination is going to present huge issues - will the designated space be available when the student/parent has made the appointment? Will the student have "free time" to attend the session at its scheduled time? Essential educational functions could easily be disrupted.

Additionally, as written each school system is charged with developing their own policies and procedures for enabling telehealth appointments. Thus providers would be faced with working out the various differing and possibly conflicting rules for each of our 24 school systems as they attempt to set up these appointments. So for the sake of consistency, we would join with the Maryland Association of Boards of Education in calling for amending the bill's language to require the Maryland State Department of Education and the Maryland Department of Health, with stakeholder input, to jointly develop guidelines for how our school systems can provide for student telehealth appointments consistently across all schools and districts.

MSPA urges you to consider a favorable report on SB 492 as amended in this manner, to ensure consistency across the state as school systems implement safe and responsible policies and procedures for student telehealth appointments during the school day. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us at [legislative@mSPAonline.org](mailto:legislative@mSPAonline.org).

Respectfully submitted,

Bradley Leposa  
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee  
Maryland School Psychologists' Association