



Committee: Senate Finance Committee

Bill Number: SB 486 - School Health and Wellness Personnel Assessment and Maryland Council on Advancement of School-Based Health Centers

Hearing Date: February 11, 2025

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Nurses Association strongly supports Senate Bill 486, which mandates the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) conduct an annual assessment of the school health and wellness personnel workforce in our state.

Senate Bill 486 is a crucial piece of legislation that addresses the growing need for comprehensive data on school health and wellness personnel. As our schools continue to navigate the complexities of providing holistic support to students, this bill ensures that we have a clear understanding of the existing workforce and the areas that require attention. The inclusion of school nurses, counselors, dental hygienists, occupational and physical therapists, school psychologists, school social workers, and speech-language pathologists in the assessment process will provide a comprehensive overview of the personnel essential to student well-being.

Furthermore, the bill's requirement for MDH and MSDE to submit a report to the General Assembly on the findings of the assessment by December 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, is a

positive step toward transparency and accountability. It ensures that the data collected will be utilized to inform policy decisions and improve recruitment and retention strategies for school health and wellness personnel. Adding a school nurse to the Maryland Council on Advancement of School-Based Health Centers is long overdue. A school nurse will bring valuable insights from frontline health professionals into the council's deliberations.

By supporting Senate Bill 486, we are taking an essential step towards fostering a healthier and more supportive educational environment for our students. The annual assessment will highlight the ratio of school health and wellness personnel to students and identify vacancies, allowing local school systems and health departments to address gaps effectively. Additionally, the feedback from stakeholders will be instrumental in developing strategies to enhance the recruitment and retention of school health and wellness professionals.

In summary, MNA urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 486. The bill not only aims to gather and report critical data but also emphasizes the importance of having a robust workforce dedicated to student health and wellness.

If you have any questions, please contact our lobbyist, Bill Kress at bill@kresshammen.com