

TO: Senate Committee on Finance

BILL: SENATE BILL 486 – School Health and Wellness Personnel Assessment and Maryland Council on Advancement of School-Based Health Centers

DATE: February 11, 2025

POSITION: Information

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is providing this information regarding **Senate Bill (SB) 486 – School Health and Wellness Personnel Assessment and Maryland Council on Advancement of School-Based Health Centers.**

SB 486 Summary

SB 486 mandates annual assessments of the school health and wellness workforce by the State Department of Education and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), requiring an annual report to the General Assembly on workforce needs and strategies for recruitment and retention of personnel. The assessment will examine student-to-personnel ratios and vacancy rates.

Information

Under SB 486, MSDE and MDH will jointly conduct an annual assessment of school health and wellness personnel. This assessment requires the departments to:

- Identify the ratio of school health and wellness personnel to students and schools by jurisdiction.
- Obtain information from each local school system and local health department regarding vacancy rates for each type of provider of school health and wellness services.
- Obtain feedback from each local school system, each local health department, and other stakeholders on strategies to improve the recruitment and retention of school health and wellness personnel.

MSDE collects some data related to staffing at the school and LEA level which is included in the Maryland Report Card. Vacancy rates are not currently tracked. Under SB 486, reporting would also include information regarding vacancy rates and feedback from LEAs and local health departments on recruitment and retention of school wellness personnel.

MSDE would need to hire an Education Program Specialist with a PIN at 50% in Fiscal Year 2026. MSDE estimates costs of \$64,216 in FY 2026. This includes salary, fringe benefits, communications, one-time start-up equipment, materials, and supplies.

The responsibilities of this position will include coordination with MDH, data collection, analysis, and report writing. This would help ensure that MSDE has the dedicated capacity needed to meet this bill's requirements.

The bill requires MSDE to obtain information from each LEA, which means that they will need to gather and provide the necessary data on staffing, vacancies, and recruitment strategies

The bill defines "school health and wellness personnel" to include counselors, dental hygienists, occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, physical therapists, school counselors, school nurses, school

psychologists, school social workers, and speech-language pathologists. Local education agencies may need to allocate resources to track and report on these specific roles, as defined by the bill, for the purposes of the assessment. It is important to note that LEAs contract out many of these services.

MSDE respectfully requests consideration of these comments as SB 486 is discussed and deliberated.

For further information, please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne at 410-767-0504, or Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov