



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

February 10th, 2025

**Bill: House Bill 0551 - Primary and Secondary Education - Public School Employees - Salaries**

**Position: Support**

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

The Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA) represents about 500 school psychologists across the state. Through our work in schools, we promote students' academic, social, and emotional development. As a result, we support House Bill 551.

Over the past few years, the Maryland General Assembly and Maryland state leaders have taken laudable steps to increase mental health services available to students through measures contained in the Blueprint and by directing funds from federal legislation. However, although those measures increased the availability of community based mental health care providers, shortages of school based providers were not addressed. As a result, school based providers like school psychologists cannot perform vital roles in the continuum of community and school based services and supports envisioned by the [National Center for School Mental Health](#) at the University of Maryland.

A specific scenario might help illustrate the potential impact of this shortage. The recently passed legislation directs funds towards community based providers offering students teletherapy they can attend in school. During all therapy sessions, patients occasionally disclose plans for self-harm. While a therapist meeting in person with a student can ensure that student's safety following such a disclosure, a teletherapist requires the assistance of an individual who can physically check in with the student. Ideally, that person would be trained to de-escalate the student until he or she can be referred to appropriate care.

The above example is just one of the many ways school based mental health professionals integrate the care students receive from community based providers into academic settings. Other examples include informing students and families of the availability and existence of community based providers, helping implement interventions recommended by community based providers in academic settings such as classrooms and cafeterias, providing vital information about students' school functioning to help community based providers formulate intervention plans, and helping support the continued implementation of classroom and schoolwide prevention programs delivered by community based providers.

Because school psychologists have training in the assessment of and intervention for academic and mental health concerns as well as education law, they are well positioned to perform the above roles. However, many schools do not have a school psychologist or other school based mental health professional present more than one or two days per week. Although the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) recommends a ratio of 1 school psychologist for every 500 students, at present there is 1 school psychologist for every 1053 Maryland students. In addition to falling short of NASP recommendations, Maryland also falls behind the neighboring states of New Jersey (1:660), New York (1:545), New Hampshire (1:712), Massachusetts (1:662), and Connecticut (1:475), to name just a few examples<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Information retrieved from: <https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/state-shortages-data-dashboard>

MSPA therefore supports HB 0551 because it creates an incentive to attract and retain school based mental health professionals such as school psychologists. Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony and for considering our input. 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) or Sarah Peters at [speters@hbstrategies.us](mailto:speters@hbstrategies.us) or 410-322-2320.

Respectfully submitted,

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Co-Chair, Legislative Committee  
Maryland School Psychologists' Association.

