

Committee: House Ways and Means

Bill Number: HB 551 Primary and Secondary Education- Public School Employees - Salaries

Date: February 10, 2025

Position: Support

Good afternoon,

My name is Jacqueline Alyea and I am a School Counselor at Owings Mills High School in Owings Mills, Maryland. Maryland. ***I strongly support House Bill 551 Primary and Secondary Education - Public School Employees - Salaries.*** I am currently not a National Board Certified Counselor, but would continue with the certification to become a highly qualified educator with the financial incentive.

It is imperative that we continue to focus on recruitment and retention of highly qualified counselors in the state of Maryland to aid in the mental health crisis our students face today. In our most recent department meeting, our data showed that counselors were only able to engage in socio-emotional counseling 9% of the time. With stretched caseloads the emphasis is on academic and college and career concerns, and we are not able to make as much progress as needed to address mental health concerns. The recruitment and retention of more highly qualified counselors could lessen caseloads and allow counselors to do more proactive mental health counseling.

Teachers who are Nationally Board Certified receive an additional \$10,000 salary annually, and another \$7,000 if they work in high needs schools like mine. As a school counselor, I have delivered lessons to 32 classes throughout this academic calendar. Additionally, I conduct two counseling groups to lessen equity gaps by addressing college and career readiness. Thus far this year I have had 946 student meetings and 53 parent meetings. I offer diverse avenues of direct assistance to students and collaborate with teachers, administrators and community partners to support students' needs. Maryland students deserve the highest caliber of mental health educators. This bill would allow counselors to be compensated for their above and beyond credentials at the same rate as teachers. **I ask the Committee for a favorable committee report on House Bill 551 to ensure this happens.**

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