



Maryland Association of School Health Nurses



Committee: House Ways and Means Committee

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

Hearing Date: February 12, 2025

Position: Support with Amendments

The Maryland Association of School Health Nurses (MASHN) strongly support *House Bill 551 – Primary and Secondary Education - Public School Employees - Salaries*. The bill would create a pathway for salary increases for school nurses and other school health staff. This legislation embodies a critical strategy to recruit and retain nurses during a severe nursing shortage. We would request one technical amendment.

More School Nurses Needed in Maryland

The National Association of School Nurses has stated that “access to a school nurse all day, every day can improve students’ health, safety, and educational achievement.”ⁱ Maryland falls short of this goal with an average of 0.74 registered nurses for every school, according to data from the Maryland State Department of Education (see attached). There are wide gaps in access to school nursing. The following jurisdictions have less than the average school nurses per school: Anne Arundel (0.62), Baltimore City (0.30), Calvert (0.72), Frederick (0.38), Garret (no RNs in the school system), Kent (0.40), Montgomery (0.57), Somerset (0.67), and Washington (0.36).

Maryland needs just under 400 more nurses to reach the goal of a full-time nurse in every school. The number may be higher if we take into account that more than one nurse may be needed for larger schools.

Why Every School Needs a Nurse

Maryland needs a nurse in every school because students' health needs have become more complex. As we have seen as students return to in-person classes in recent months, students have layers of unmet health needs that impede their ability to learn and integrate into the classroom.

School nurses are essential to support:

- **Students with complex medical needs.** Children with complex needs are those with chronic, severe health conditions, major functional limitations, and substantial health service needsⁱⁱ School nurses are essential in ensuring these students can remain in school;
- **Students with increasing behavioral health needs.** Children and adolescents are facing a mental health crises. Youth suicide deaths have already been on the increase in Maryland. Between 2007 and 2018, youth suicide deaths rose by 21%. Now in the aftermath of the pandemic, children and adolescents are facing even greater risks. Leading health care organizations have declared a “National Emergency in Child and Adolescent Mental Health.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Maryland is planning to make significant investments in behavioral health in schools in recognition of the youth behavioral health crises. Yet implementation of new behavioral health programs will be challenging in schools without a full-time nurse. School nurses coordinate all somatic and behavioral health services provided to students.

- **Students with chronic diseases such as diabetes, asthma, and hypertension.** One-fourth of children have a chronic disease, and 5 % have multiple chronic conditions. The numbers of children with chronic conditions has been rising.^{iv} School nurses coordinate care with a student's primary care provider to manage student's chronic conditions and improve their health outcomes. School nurses administer treatments, including medication, to ensure students can remain in school.
- **Students in health emergencies.** It is estimated that 10-25% of emergencies for children occur while they are in school.^v School nurses are the key in managing those emergencies effectively.

How the Bill Would Help Address the School Nurse Shortage/Technical Amendment

Local jurisdictions are struggling to recruit and retain school nurses because of the broader nursing professional shortages. Health care programs and facilities generally have higher salaries, making it difficult for local jurisdictions to compete for nurses. The bill would help alleviate the salary gap for school nurses who meet the criteria as determined in the implementation of the bill.

We would suggest a technical amendment that school nurses may work for either the local education agency or the local health department.

On page 3 in line 7, insert "OR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT"

Conclusion

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

ⁱ <https://www.nasn.org/nasn-resources/professional-practice-documents/position-statements/ps-workload>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.childrenshospitals.org/issues-and-advocacy/children-with-medical-complexity/issue-briefs-and-reports/the-landscape-of-medical-care-for-children-with-medical-complexity>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/child-and-adolescent-healthy-mental-development/aap-aacap-cha-declaration-of-a-national-emergency-in-child-and-adolescent-mental-health/>

^{iv} <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5010981/#R41>

^v <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article-abstract/122/4/887/71309/Medical-Emergencies-Occurring-at-School?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

Employer (2022)	School Nurses	Licensed Practical Nurses	Certified Nursing Assistant	Other Health Services	Enrollment (2018-19)	Schools Count	Students Per Nurse	Nurses Per School
Allegany	22	1	0	6	8539	26	388	0.85
Anne Arundel	77	21	135.5	7	83300	124	1082	0.62
Baltimore	173	0	40	0	113814	174	658	0.99
Baltimore City	50	3	127	1	79297	167	1585.94	0.30
Calvert	18	7	0	2	15936	25	885.33	0.72
Caroline	8	2	7	0	5829	10	728.63	0.80
Carroll	48	3	0	3	25179	44	524.56	1.09
Cecil	29	0	0	0	15307	29	527.83	1.00
Charles	35	9	0	0	27108	38	774.51	0.92
Dorchester	12	4	1*	1*	4785	13	398.75	0.92
Frederick	26	8	56	0	42713	68	1642.81	0.38
Garrett	0	11	0	0	3842	12	NA	NA
Harford	61	5	0	0	37826	54	620.10	1.13
Howard	59	0	62	0	57907	77	981.47	0.77
Kent	2	0	4	1	1912	5	956.00	0.40
Montgomery	118	0	212	59	162680	208	1378.64	0.57
Prince George's	198	21	0	2	132667	208	670.04	0.95
Queen Anne's	14	2	0	0	7749	14	553.50	1.00
SEED School	1	1	0	1	404	1	404.00	1.00
Somerset	6	4	1	1	2930	9	488.33	0.67
St. Mary's	33	3	0	0	17999	30	545.42	1.10
Talbot	6	0	6	1	4674	8	779.00	0.75
Washington Hospital	16	10	26	1	22681	45	1417.56	0.36
Wicomico	28	0	9	2	14949	25	533.89	1.12
Worcester	17	0	0	0	6810	14	400.59	1.21
Statewide	1057	115	685.5	87	896837	1428	848.47	0.74

Notes * 1 person certified as CNA and CMT

Data Source and Years: Nursing data from 2018-2019 MSDE Survey; Enrollment and school count data from 2018-2019 MdReportCard Enrollment Data; the local employer is current year (2022)