



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

The Maryland School Counselor Association (MSCA) supports *House Bill 551 – Primary and Secondary Education – Public School Employees – Salaries*. The bill provides salary increases for certain school personnel to improve recruitment and retention.

Despite the Blueprint Comprehensive Implementation plan acknowledging that school counselors should be given NBC salary incentives, the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has yet to develop guidance for the LEAs regarding NBC certification for school counselors, media specialists, and other positions and the requirements to be eligible for the National Board Certification (NBC) salary increases.¹

MSCA believes that HB 551 would provide a clear path for LEAs to implement NBC salary incentives and cut the red tape in waiting on AIB and MSDE to issue guidance.

Many educators have NBCs but are currently not eligible for the State portion of the salary increases (\$10,000 for NBC and \$7,000 more for teaching in an identified low-performing school). HB 551 would expand eligibility for these increases to educators teaching in critical shortage areas like school counseling. Leveling the playing field is important to making sure that highly qualified educators in these roles stay in them rather than move to NBC-eligible roles and exacerbate shortages in non-NBC-eligible roles.

¹ See p. 99 of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future Comprehensive Implementation Plan https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hQyHcPO_5T703I3esxE1ocBrs5WT96d7/view

Just like teachers, school counselors can obtain the additional credential of National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT). MSCA strongly believes that we need to employ a comprehensive strategy, including salary incentives, to address the shortage of school counselors in Maryland.

The Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education's 2019 report adopted the nationally recommended ratio of 250 students per school counselor. However, the 2023-2024 MSDE baseline data indicated that the student-counselor ratio in schools was on average 307 students per school counselor. Yet, many of our counties are significantly above this recommended ratio, with several counties having over 1,000 students per counselor.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Jocelyn I. Collins at [jcollins@policypartners.net](mailto:collins@policypartners.net).