

February 24, 2025

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and distinguished members of the Ways and Means Committee,

The National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a statewide network of more than 58,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a non-profit that is dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for persons with mental illnesses, their families and the wider community.

HB959 enters Maryland into the School Psychologist Interstate Licensure Compact. The School Psychologist Interstate Licensure Compact would increase access to school psychologists by allowing reciprocity—school psychologists from other states can deliver care in Maryland and Maryland psychologists would be able to deliver care to other states who are a part of the compact.

Serious shortages exist in the mental health professional workforce. The lack of providers exacerbates unmet needs and leaves more people without options for mental health care. It would be to the State's benefit to allow additional licensed school psychologists to practice in Maryland. The compact provides a tool for addressing workforce shortages—and with the severity of our workforce shortage, Maryland should utilize every tool in our toolbox to ensure access to mental health services. We believe that early intervention, recovery, and support should be available to children, adolescents, and young adults living with mental illness. Undiagnosed, untreated, and inadequately treated mental illness significantly interfere with a student's ability to learn, to grow, and to develop. Because children spend much of their productive time in school and services can be integrated into their regular daily routine, NAMI MD believes that both public and private elementary, middle and high schools should provide and/or facilitate and sustain provision of appropriate mental health services, supports, and appropriate accommodations.

By entering the compact, we are increasing the number of school psychologists in the State, who can, in turn, offer services to Marylanders who need them the most.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.

Kathryn S. Farinholt  
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