



Maryland Occupational Therapy Association

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Committee:	Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Bill Number:	Senate Bill 299
Title:	County Boards of Education - Therapy Dogs - Policy for Handling and Use in Schools
Hearing Date:	February 27, 2026
Position:	Support

The Maryland Occupational Therapy Association (MOTA) supports Senate Bill 299 - County Boards of Education - Therapy Dogs - Policy for Handling and Use in Schools. This bill requires county boards of education to allow therapy dogs in public schools and to adopt formal policies governing their use. The policies must address certification standards, handler requirements, permitted locations and times, parent and staff notification, and accommodations for allergies or discomfort.

Occupational therapy practitioners support this bill because therapy dogs can help students improve emotional regulation, attention, and social participation which are all core areas of school-based occupational therapy. Animal-assisted interventions have been shown to reduce anxiety, increase engagement, and support sensory regulation, which can make it easier for students to participate in classroom tasks and therapeutic activities. By requiring clear policies and safety standards, the bill also creates a structured framework that allows therapy dogs to be used safely and consistently as part of supportive school services.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Michael Paddy at mpaddy@policypartners.net.