



February 23rd, 2026

Maryland House of Representatives
Ways and Means Committee
130 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Honorable Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the pediatric nurse practitioners (PNPs) and fellow pediatric-focused advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) Maryland Chesapeake Chapter, we are writing to express our **strong support for House Bill 0901 – Education – Public School Students – Recognition of External Diagnosis of Autism**. This bill is a crucial step toward ensuring timely access to services and supports Maryland students with autism.

HB 0901 appropriately requires schools to recognize a student’s external diagnosis of autism from qualified medical, mental health, or educational professionals until the school completes its own initial evaluation. This acknowledgement prevents harmful delays in services at a time when early intervention is vital for developmental outcomes. The bill also establishes a 30-day timeline for initiating the school-based evaluation upon receipt of the external diagnosis and parental consent, ensuring families are not left waiting indefinitely.

Proposed Amendment (Line (2))

To further strengthen HB 0901 and reflect the reality of clinical practice, I respectfully request an amendment to Section 8–404(e)(2) to **explicitly include licensed developmental pediatricians and licensed nurse practitioners** within the list of recognized professionals authorized to provide an external autism diagnosis.

Proposed language addition at line (2):

“FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS SUBSECTION, A MEDICAL, MENTAL HEALTH, OR EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONAL INCLUDES: a licensed developmental pediatrician or nurse practitioner.”

Developmental pediatricians are among the most qualified clinicians to evaluate and diagnose neurodevelopmental disorders, including autism. Nurse practitioners—particularly those trained in pediatrics, developmental-behavioral care, or mental health—also regularly perform diagnostic evaluations in community and clinical settings. Adding these licensed professionals ensures the bill reflects current clinical practice, expands access to timely and credible diagnoses, and prevents unnecessary barriers for families in areas with limited specialist availability. HB 0901 is an essential measure that honors the expertise of qualified clinicians, reduces delays in support, and improves outcomes for students with autism. Including the above amendment will further expand equitable access to diagnostic pathways and strengthen the bill’s real-world impact.

The pediatric advanced practice nurses of your state are grateful to you for your attention to these crucial issues. The Maryland Chapter of NAPNAP membership includes over 200 primary and acute care pediatric nurse practitioners who are committed to improving the health and advocating for our state’s pediatric patients. If we can be of any further assistance, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Maryland Chapter legislative chair, Dr. JD Murphy, at mdchesnappnapleg@outlook.com.

Sincerely,

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Maryland Chapter Legislative Chair

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