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BILL: HB 740
TITLE: Public Schools - School-Based Mental Health Services Full-Time Therapist
DATE: February 18, 2026
POSITION: Unfavorable
COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means and Health Committees
CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **opposes** HB 740.

This bill requires that each public school employ a full-time therapist during instruction hours who is licensed by The State Board Of Professional Counselors And Therapists. It directs each county board of education in tandem with the county health department to provide (1) adequate school health services; (2) instruction in health education, including the importance of physical activity in maintaining good health; and (3) a healthful school environment. HB 740 also directs the county Department and Maryland Department of Health to jointly, (1) develop public standards and guidelines for school health programs; (2) offer assistance to the county boards and county health departments in their implementation. HB 740 is scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2026.

PSSAM strongly values student mental health and well-being. At the same time superintendents must balance education priorities within fiscal reality. Requiring a full-time therapist in each of Maryland's over 1,400 public schools would impose substantial costs on local education agencies (LEAs). Because the bill does not identify a new or dedicated funding source, HB 740 creates an unfunded mandate for local school systems who would be forced to redirect existing funds, reducing resources for other essential educational mandates and priorities.

It is important to note that, over the past five years, Maryland has made meaningful progress in expanding student access to mental health services through existing initiatives. In 2022, the Maryland State Department of Education launched the Maryland School Mental Health Response Program (MD-SMHRP), which achieved its year two objective to train LEA staff in best practices to advance comprehensive school mental health systems and address student mental health needs.

In addition, in 2025, the Maryland Department of Health expanded access to behavioral health services by allowing local education agencies to offer certain Medicaid-covered services to eligible students. As a result, approximately 650,000 children across the state now have access to diagnostic evaluations, individual, family, and group therapy services provided by licensed school psychologists and other qualified professionals.

Further, as part of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the General Assembly established the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports, a 24-member body tasked with developing best practices for delivering student behavioral health, wraparound, and community-based services. During the [2024–2025](#) academic year alone, 136,945 students received behavioral health services through these coordinated efforts. Consistent with this intent, Maryland's community schools model already emphasizes coordinated, wraparound services that connect students and families to mental health, health care, and social supports through partnerships with local agencies.

Given the above highlights we remain confident that Maryland's current policies and investments are effectively expanding access to student mental health supports without imposing additional unfunded mandates on local school systems.

For these reasons, PSSAM respectfully **opposes** HB 740 and kindly requests an **unfavorable** report.