

Testimony of Christa Kulp, Ph.D., NCSP

On Behalf of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association
Representing Anne Arundel County Public Schools

In Support of Senate Bill 0238 – School Psychologist Interstate Licensure Compact

Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Christa Kulp, and I am a Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) with over 20 years of experience serving students in Maryland. I am proud to represent the Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA) and Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS). I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 0238, the School Psychologist Interstate Licensure Compact.

The National Association of School Psychologists recommends a ratio of one school psychologist for every 500 students to ensure adequate academic, behavioral, and mental health support. However, in Maryland, the current average ratio is approximately 1:1,000—double the recommended level. In many counties, ratios are even higher, reaching two to three times the recommended standard. These excessive caseloads significantly limit our ability to provide timely evaluations, preventative mental health services, and proactive school-wide supports.

School psychologists are uniquely trained to support students' academic achievement, social-emotional development, behavioral needs, and mental health. While our days are structured around evaluations, consultations, counseling, and multidisciplinary meetings, they are frequently interrupted by urgent matters such as student crises, threats of violence or self-harm, safety concerns, and acute emotional or behavioral needs. These situations require immediate, skilled intervention and often demand real-time reprioritization of responsibilities.

Beyond crisis response, we collaborate extensively with teachers, families, administrators, and community providers. We interpret complex data, contribute to high-stakes eligibility and placement decisions, and ensure compliance with federal and state regulations. Each of these responsibilities requires careful documentation, professional judgment, and significant time. Many school psychologists serve multiple schools—sometimes including specialized programs—further increasing workload demands.

When staffing ratios are this high, school psychologists are forced into a reactive, triage-based model. Instead of implementing preventative services and early interventions, we are compelled to respond after problems escalate. The consequences are significant: delayed evaluations, unmet student needs, increased disciplinary actions, staff burnout, and greater strain on educational systems already facing educator shortages and an unprecedented youth mental health crisis.

The Interstate Licensure Compact offers a practical, fiscally responsible solution. By enabling licensed school psychologists to practice across participating states, the Compact reduces barriers to mobility and helps districts fill critical vacancies more efficiently. It leverages an already qualified workforce without lowering standards, while strengthening the pipeline of

professionals available to serve Maryland students. This investment supports both workforce stability and improved student outcomes.

I currently serve in AACPS, although I am fortunate to serve one school full-time, many of my colleagues cover multiple buildings and specialized programs. Throughout my career, I have served both elementary and secondary schools across the county. I now work at the Virtual Academy, Maryland's first fully accredited statewide virtual school. Approximately 34% of our students receive special education services. While ours is a program of choice, many families enroll because they believe their child's needs were not fully met in a traditional comprehensive setting. The demand for specialized psychological expertise continues to grow. Our students cannot wait. Expanding access to qualified school psychologists through the Interstate Licensure Compact is a strategic, evidence-based step toward ensuring that every child in Maryland has access to the mental health and educational support they deserve.

At my school, no two days are ever the same. I may begin the morning finalizing a comprehensive evaluation report to meet a legal deadline, only to pivot immediately to conduct a threat assessment after a student makes statements about potential violence or self-harm. In between, I consult with teachers about behavioral interventions, counsel a student experiencing anxiety, respond to parent emails, and participate in an IEP/504 meetings where high-stakes decisions about services and placement must be made. Throughout the day, unexpected crises—ranging from safety concerns to emotional breakdowns—require immediate attention and thoughtful intervention. I may need to contact Child Protective Services due to suspected abuse or neglect, ensuring a child's safety while carefully documenting and consulting with administration. In between these urgent matters, I facilitate restorative circles to address student conflict and repair peer relationships. Each responsibility requires professional judgment, emotional presence, and meticulous documentation. Balancing all of these issues and staffing underscores both the complexity of the role and the urgent need for adequate school psychologist staffing to ensure students receive appropriate support.

As we sit in area of the United States Naval Academy, Fort Meade, Naval Air Station, Aberdeen Proving Ground, this legislation directly supports our military families by enabling military-connected school psychologists to continue practicing without unnecessary barriers following a Permanent Change of Station (PCS). For AACPS, where more than 10% of our student population are military-connected dependents, and one of the highest percentages in the state, the need for Senate Bill 0238 is especially clear. Passage of the bill would strengthen workforce continuity and ensure consistent access to qualified school psychologists for the students and families who serve our country.

On behalf of MSPA, AACPS, and the students and families we serve, I respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 0238. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Christa Kulp, Ph.D., NCSP
Nationally Certified School Psychologist