
TO: House Ways and Means Committee

BILL: House Bill (HB) 740 – Public Schools – School–Based Mental Health Services– Full–Time Therapist

DATE: February 18, 2026

POSITION: Information

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) provides this Letter of Information regarding **House Bill (HB) 740 – Public Schools – School–Based Mental Health Services– Full–Time Therapist**. HB 740 would expand mental health support within Maryland’s public schools by requiring every public school to employ a full-time therapist who will provide school-based mental health services to students during the instructional day.

MSDE shares the General Assembly’s commitment to expanding access to school-based mental health resources for students. Ensuring students have access to appropriate mental health services during the instructional day is an important component of supporting student well-being and academic success. HB 740 would significantly expand school-based mental health capacity, but it carries substantial fiscal, staffing, and implementation implications that would require additional resources at both the LEA and State levels.

First, MSDE seeks clarification about which types of licensed professionals qualify as “full-time therapists,” described in the bill. The State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists specifically licenses professional counselors and various specialist therapists. However, schools employ many other individuals who support student mental health, such as social workers, school counselors, and school psychologists.

Additionally, although increasing the number of mental health professionals to schools could increase the capacity of the student support team in the schools, HB 740 would have a substantial fiscal and operational impact on local education agencies (LEAs). The goal of hiring a therapist in each of Maryland’s 1,400 public schools will increase expenditures at the local level. Recruiting enough licensed therapists to meet the requirements in this bill will be difficult, particularly in rural or high-need areas, and may require partnerships with universities and professional boards to expand the talent pipeline. Capacity to meet these requirements will be uneven across LEAs. MSDE would also incur costs for increased technical assistance and training to LEAs, ensuring that therapists meet licensing and certification requirements, and supporting integration of these services into school operations.

MSDE respectfully requests consideration of these comments as HB740 is discussed and deliberated. For further information, please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at laurel.cratsley@maryland.gov.