



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 340: School Psychologist Interstate Licensure Compact**

**February 11th, 2026**

Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and esteemed members of the Ways and Means Committee, I come before you today to offer testimony in favor of **House Bill 340: School Psychologist Interstate Licensure Compact**. This bill addresses school psychologist shortages by allowing member states to recognize a school psychologist's license from another member state, so school psychologists can begin working more quickly. It also allows states to share licensing and background information but allows them to continue to exercise full authority over who gets a license, the scope of practice, discipline, and standards for the profession. I strongly believe that Maryland will benefit from entering the compact based on what I have to share with you today.

I want you to imagine a childhood that may resonate with many of us. It's late afternoon, homework is either completed or at least attempted, and children eagerly spill out into the street to play. There are no sign-up sheets or adults directing the flow, just the shout of "You're it!" as a game of tag began, hopscotch marks on the pavement, and laughter echoing through neighborhoods. These simple moments build friendships, confidence, and conflict-resolution skills that shaped who we became. Now, fast forward to today. Many children spend more time alone with screens, facing cyberbullying, constant comparison, family stress, and increased mental health challenges due to the lingering effects of a past pandemic and a world that feels increasingly overwhelming. Children are navigating a more complex reality than previous generations, often without enough comprehensive support, and this is where school psychologists play a critical role.

HB 340 tackles these challenges by supporting students with unprecedented mental health needs and alleviating the burdensome workload of Maryland school psychologists. Across Maryland and the nation, there is a significant shortage of school psychologists. The National Association of School Psychologists recommends a ratio of 500 students per school psychologist to provide effective mental health and academic support. Maryland falls short of this standard, with many school psychologists serving nearly three times that number of students each week and traveling to multiple schools daily to complete critical screenings. Consequently, students often work with school psychologists who may not have the ample time to devote their attention to them, fully understand their experience, or fully understand their background. These professionals are essential, providing mental health services, behavioral interventions, and academic assessments that help students thrive.

Our systems need to be adaptable and forward-thinking to develop and maintain a diverse, culturally responsive school psychologist workforce, one that is ready to protect and support students, including Black youths. Research consistently shows that schools with more diverse staff achieve more equitable disciplinary outcomes and provide stronger student support. However, despite increasingly diverse student populations, the school psychologist workforce remains predominantly white. In 2023, the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health highlighted a worsening mental health crisis, noting that suicide rates among Black youth had significantly increased over the years, marking the most rapid rise compared to all other racial groups. Maryland must act now to expand the pool of mobile professionals through the compact, ultimately protecting the lives and well-being of all students.

HB 340 is a practical strategy to attract more school psychologists to Maryland by facilitating a faster pathway for military families and individuals relocating to the state. It acknowledges their licenses and all the requirements for obtaining one, bringing more experience and talented school psychologists to Maryland's local school systems, while ensuring high professional standards. Maryland has a large military community, and licensed professionals who serve as military spouses often need to relocate every two to three years. Each move can mean starting the licensing process over again, causing financial strain for families and delays for students who need services. Students cannot pause their struggles with anxiety, trauma, learning difficulties, or behavioral needs while paperwork catches up with them. The compact streamlines the licensure process by removing unnecessary barriers, such as repetitive coursework, extra testing, and expensive application requirements so that qualified professionals can more quickly support students, allowing Maryland local school systems to recruit successfully.

HB 340 is a fiscally sound measure that effectively addresses the needs of the school psychologist profession. It allows individuals who meet the high qualifications of the compact, which surpass some of our current qualification routes, to bring their expertise to Maryland. School psychologists are essential members of IEP, 504, and student support teams, playing a critical role in meeting the academic, behavioral, and mental health needs of all students. Despite their importance in building safe and successful schools, they have been largely overlooked under the Blueprint regarding compensation and career progression. The compact offers an opportunity to support and recognize the challenges school psychologists face, such as understaffing and overloaded caseloads, by encouraging more psychologists to practice in the state. In essence, if you don't compensate them with the Blueprint, at least make Maryland a more attractive place to work so they have the time and space to perform their jobs effectively.

Importantly, the compact is fiscally responsible; neighboring Delaware joined last year and reported no major fiscal or administrative barriers. Colorado, Georgia, Alabama, Kansas, Nebraska, and West Virginia have also joined, and four additional states—including Pennsylvania, Ohio, Virginia, and Kentucky—have active legislation to join. Joining now secures us a seat at the table with the commission finalizing the rules. This compact is coming, compacts always do. If we join now, we can be in the driver's seat and benefit from newly mobile practitioners. If we wait, the rules will be set for us.

When we discuss our children's future, we often envision them as stable and responsible adults contributing to their communities. However, preparing them for the future starts by

acknowledging the challenges they face during their childhood, including potential mental health issues, and prioritizing their overall well-being. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to return a favorable report on House Bill 340.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bernice Mireku-North". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Honorable Bernice Mireku-North, Esq.  
Delegate. Maryland Legislative District 14  
Maryland House of Delegates