



Testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee

House Bill 740: Public Schools - School-Based Mental Health Services - Full-Time Therapist **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT**

February 18, 2026

Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

The National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD) strongly supports House Bill 740: Public Schools - School-Based Mental Health Services - Full-Time Therapist. Students whose behavioral health impedes their ability to learn need our support, and we owe every one of them access to care.

The members of the Social Workers in Schools Committee (SWIS) at NASW-MD see these needs in their work in the schools on a daily basis. In addition to their direct work with individual students and their families, they provide preventative care, early intervention, and information/referral services to do their best to ensure that all needs are met. The funding provided to the Maryland Consortium for Coordinated Community Supports (CCCS), a key component of the Blueprint legislation under the auspices of the Community Health Resources Commission (CHRC), provides additional services in schools—where students are—through local community providers. While over 80% of Maryland’s students have access to these programs, that care is not in every school and not throughout the school day. The advantage of having one full-time professional therapist on-site to work with the most acute students cannot be underestimated.

We are requesting an amendment to the bill that will expand those who can be employed to provide this care to include all mental health professionals licensed to do so under Maryland’s Health Occupations Code. At a time of documented workforce shortages in mental health, this will broaden the pool of those who can fill these critical positions.

On page 2, in line 28 after the word “BE” insert:

“AN INDIVIDUAL WHO IS LICENSED OR CERTIFIED UNDER THE HEALTH OCCUPATIONS ARTICLE AND WHOSE SCOPE OF PRACTICE INCLUDES THE PROVISION OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES. LICENSED AND CERTIFIED BY THE STATE BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS AND THERAPISTS.”

(over)

We ask that the House Ways and Means Committee return a favorable report on this legislation, amended as we are requesting.

Respectfully,

Gail L. Martin, MSW

School Social Worker (retired)

NASW-MD Chapter, Social Work in Schools Committee Legislative Liaison