

FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS
House Bill 740
Public Schools - School-Based Mental Health Services - Full-Time Therapist
House Ways & Means Committee
February 18, 2026

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The Maryland State Education Association supports, with amendments, House Bill 740, which would require each public school to employ a full-time therapist that provides school-based mental health services to students during the instructional day, with the full-time therapist to be licensed and certified by the State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 44 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

We appreciate the sponsor's aim of supporting the mental and behavioral health of young Marylanders. Students in distress need support to be fully prepared to learn, and by expanding public schools' behavioral health workforce, we invest in students' well-being.

We would urge reconsideration of how this effort is approached at a staffing level. Students are often best served when behavioral health staff are assigned based on staff-to-student ratios, ensuring that each school has adequate staff to meet student needs and ensure sustainable caseloads. The level, term, and nature of the support school-based behavioral health professionals provide may also vary based on their specialty – for example, school social workers, school counselors, and school psychologists– and it is important to consider the balance of staff in each specialty based on a school's needs and context.

We wholeheartedly agree that our state needs increased staff capacity in school behavioral health, and we look forward to the opportunity to work with the sponsor to identify the most effective approach to that end.