

HB 740 - Hearing on Wednesday, February 18, 2026

Dear Committee,

As a Maryland resident, I **strongly oppose HB 740**, which mandates every Maryland public school to employ a full-time licensed therapist for mental health services during the instructional day.

While student mental health matters, this is an **unfunded, rigid mandate** that ignores local needs and realities:

- **Fiscal and practical burdens:**
 - It forces districts to hire costly therapists amid shortages and tight budgets, likely cutting classrooms, special education, or safety programs—hitting rural/small schools hardest.
 - Therapist shortages in Maryland (especially rural areas) make compliance unrealistic without creating worse gaps elsewhere.
- **Lack of flexibility:** Many schools already use effective counselors, psychologists, partnerships, or telehealth— a one-therapist-per-school rule is inefficient and ignores enrollment or proven tiered models.
- **Parental rights concerns:** The bill includes **no requirements** for parental notification, consent, or involvement in these on-site services. Maryland already allows minors 12+ to consent to mental/emotional health treatment (if deemed mature by a provider), potentially enabling school therapists to provide care or referrals without parents knowing—eroding parents' fundamental role in guiding their children's well-being, especially on sensitive issues.

This approach risks redundancy, disruption to instruction, and unmet mandates without evidence it outperforms targeted, funded alternatives.

Please **reject HB 740**

Thank you,
Glenna Downes