

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 499 (Senator M. Washington)
 Education, Energy, and the Environment

State Department of Education - School Psychologist Recruitment Program

This bill establishes a School Psychologist Recruitment Program in the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to provide professional support to individuals who are, or are seeking to become, school psychologists in Maryland. The program must maintain a clearinghouse of school psychologist best practices, communicate and promote upcoming opportunities and available resources to school psychologists, and seek to provide support to school psychologists from groups historically underrepresented among professional personnel in the State. The program must reimburse school psychologists for attending professional conferences, as specified. Annually, the program must select up to 100 individuals, giving priority to school psychologists from historically underrepresented groups, for whom the program must provide funds to pay the certification fee charged by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). MSDE must adopt regulations to carry out the program. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MSDE general fund expenditures increase by *at least* \$241,100 in FY 2025 to implement the program, as discussed below. Out-years reflect elimination of one-time costs and ongoing personnel expenses. Costs for reimbursement of conference attendance and payment of certification fees are not quantified below. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	241,100	109,600	114,500	119,500	124,700
Net Effect	(\$241,100)	(\$109,600)	(\$114,500)	(\$119,500)	(\$124,700)

Note: () = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: To the extent the program is successful at recruiting school psychologists, local school systems may benefit. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: Professional development offered under the program may include (1) virtual courses or webinars; (2) mentoring or peer collaboration programs; and (3) provision of support materials.

To be reimbursed for attending professional conferences, a school psychologist must submit application materials to the program that include information on the conference and receipts or other documentation of the expenses to be reimbursed. Subject to funding availability, the program must approve an applicant to receive reimbursement if (1) the application is complete and received within 180 days of the last day of the conference; (2) the amount requested does not exceed an amount determined in regulation; and (3) the applicant is eligible to receive reimbursement.

An individual who does not complete all the requirements for certification by NASP must reimburse the program for the full amount of aid given. This does not apply to an individual who completes all requirements for NASP certification but who does not receive certification. The program may provide aid to an individual for up to two applications for NASP certification.

Current Law: Under the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR 13a.12.03.08), “school psychologist” means an individual who is certified to provide psychological services to children in a public or State-approved nonpublic school setting. The school psychologist supervises interns and psychometrists (individuals who work directly under the professional supervision of a school psychologist and who assist in administering psychological tests and other related psychometric tasks). To qualify for MSDE certification as a school psychologist, an applicant must meet one of four sets of requirements:

- hold a master’s or higher degree in school psychology from a State-approved program and have qualifying scores on the State-approved test for school psychologists;
- hold a master’s or higher degree; complete a State-approved program in school psychology, culminating in at least a 1,200-hour internship in school psychology; and have qualifying scores on the State-approved test for school psychologists;
- hold a valid Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) certificate issued by the National School Psychology Certification Board; or
- hold a master’s or higher degree from an institution of higher education and hold a valid professional certificate in school psychology from another state (with appropriate verification of at least 27 months of satisfactory performance as a school

psychologist during the past seven years on the same basis for which application is being made for a comparable Maryland certificate).

Each school system must provide school psychological services. The School Psychology Program is a comprehensive continuum of services and activities based on psychological principles; the continuum of services and activities includes, but is not limited to, consultations, psychological counseling, psychological assessments, professional development, and program development. The goal of the program is to prevent or remediate educational, emotional, or behavioral problems by identifying, analyzing, and reporting psychoeducational needs through consultation, observation, or psychological and educational assessment. According to MSDE, comprehensive school psychological services are undertaken in concert with the activities of teachers, administrators, school counselors, and other school staff.

Chapter 552 of 2019 required each local school system to submit an interim and final report on school psychologists in the local school system. The reports had to include specified information including the current ratio of school psychologists to students in each public school and include strategies (including any additional State and local funding), by October 1, 2020, (1) to have at least one school psychologist at schools with fewer than 700 students and (2) for schools with 700 or more students, to have a ratio of at least one school psychologist for every 700 students. Each local school system was required to submit an interim report by July 1, 2020, and a final report by December 1, 2020.

State Expenditures:

Administrative Costs

To implement the program, MSDE likely requires one full-time staff member with experience/expertise in school psychologist certification requirements to, at a minimum, (1) provide professional development to individuals who are, or are seeking to become, school psychologists; (2) maintain a clearinghouse of school psychologist best practices; (3) communicate and promote upcoming opportunities and available resources to school psychologists; (4) reimburse school psychologists for attending professional conferences; (5) provide aid to specified individuals for NASP certification fees; (6) adopt criteria, procedures, application forms, and regulations as required by the bill; and (7) provide support to school psychologists from groups historically underrepresented among professional personnel in the State.

Additionally, MSDE likely requires contractual expenses in fiscal 2025 only for consultants to create professional development programs (which the program must provide under the bill) and establish a best practices clearinghouse. Based on projects of similar

size and scope, developing professional development programs costs approximately \$100,000 and creating a best practices clearinghouse costs approximately \$50,000.

Thus, MSDE general fund expenditures increase by *at least* \$241,079 in fiscal 2025, which accounts for a 90-day start-up delay from the bill’s July 1, 2024 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one education program specialist to handle the duties specified above. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses, as well as one-time contractual costs to create professional development programs and establish a best practices clearinghouse.

	<u>FY 2025</u>	<u>FY 2026</u>
New Position	1.0	0.0
One-time Consultant to Develop Training Courses	\$100,000	-
One-time Consultant to Develop Clearinghouse	50,000	-
Salary and Fringe Benefits	83,823	\$108,527
One-time Staff Start-up Costs	6,446	-
Ongoing Staff Operating Expenses	<u>810</u>	<u>1,091</u>
Minimum MSDE Expenditures	\$241,079	\$109,618

Future year expenditures reflect a full salary with annual increases and employee turnover and ongoing operating expenses.

This analysis *does not* reflect the cost to (1) reimburse school psychologists for attending professional conferences or (2) provide aid to up to 100 individuals annually in an amount equal to the NASP certification fee. As both are required under the bill, MSDE general fund expenditures increase; however, the amount cannot be reliably estimated at this time.

Actual expenditures to reimburse for attending professional conferences are subject to funding availability under the bill and depend on the number of school psychologists who submit and qualify for reimbursement and the maximum amount of reimbursement allowed under MSDE regulations, as specified under the bill.

National Association of School Psychologists Fee Reimbursement

MSDE estimates that reimbursement for 100 NASP certification fees costs as much as \$21,000 annually based on the range of \$110 to \$210 for NASP certification and renewal fees, though the actual amount will depend on the number and type of certifications reimbursed.

NASP offers a NCSP credential to school psychologists that meet certain standards of graduate preparation, ethical and professional practice, and continuing professional development. Initial certification fees range from \$60 to \$210 for graduates of

NASP-approved/accredited programs and from \$160 to \$360 for graduates of non-NASP-approved/accredited programs. Each NCSP credential must be renewed every three years. Renewal fees are \$99 for members and \$199 for nonmembers. Under the bill, the program may provide aid to an individual for up to two applications for NASP certification. The program must select, consistent with the amount provided in the State budget for the program, up to 100 individuals annually to provide aid in an amount equal to the NASP certification fee. Thus, actual expenditures depend on the criteria for selection of recipients of aid developed by MSDE as specified under the bill, the number of school psychologists seeking initial NASP certification, the number of school psychologists seeking to renew their credential, and the applicable certification fees.

For illustrative purposes only, if aid were provided to 100 individuals for initial certification at the student or first year in practice rate of \$60, general fund expenditures increase by \$6,000; if aid were provided to 100 individuals for initial certification at the nonmember rate of \$360 for a graduate of a non-NASP-approved/accredited program, expenditures increase by \$36,000. If MSDE limits aid to twice per individual, expenditures for aid decrease over time.

Conference Reimbursement

Under one set of assumptions, MSDE expenditures increase by \$247,500 annually to reimburse school psychologists for attending conferences. This estimate assumes about 225 individuals (about 25% of current school psychologists) attend one conference at an average cost of \$1,100 per conference. Actual expenditures will vary depending on the number of school psychologists who submit and qualify for reimbursement and the maximum amount of reimbursement allowed under MSDE regulations, as specified under the bill.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 961 of 2023, HB 752 of 2022, and HB 1096 of 2021.

Designated Cross File: HB 1401 (Delegate Reilly, *et al.*) - Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): Maryland Association of County Health Officers; Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Health; Department of Legislative Services

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