



Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Bill: Senate Bill 575: State Department of Education – Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices – Guidance and Assistance

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

We are writing on behalf of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA), a professional organization representing about 500 school psychologist across the state. We advocate for the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic wellbeing of students and families across Maryland.

School psychologists provide comprehensive services to Maryland's students. This includes the screening, assessment, and intervention of reading difficulties and dyslexia. We work closely with teachers, special educators, reading specialists, and speech/language pathologists, among others, to provide support to struggling readers around the state.

The Maryland General Assembly passed the Ready to Read bill in 2019, which outlines procedures for screening of early literacy difficulties in young students. Senate Bill 575 is a follow-up to that legislation in that the advisory group it forms would be charged with creating a handbook that will provide school systems and staff with the most up-to-date science on reading difficulties. The handbook also provides guidance for school systems on evidence-based interventions and screening programs for such difficulties. This is a resource desperately needed, as it has been our experience that schools very often lack understanding of the most current reading science, to the detriment of their students.

MSPA is in strong support of Senate Bill 575 – Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices – Guidance and Assistance, and we respectfully urge a favorable vote. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please feel free to contact us at legislative@mspaonline.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Kyle Potter, Ph.D., NCSP
Chair, Legislative Committee
Maryland School Psychologists' Association

Bradley D. Petry, Psy.D.
President, 2019-2020
Maryland School Psychologists' Association

¹Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative (2011/12). *National survey of children's health*. [Data Query]. Retrieved from www.childhealthdata.org/browse/survey?q=2257&r=1

²Overstreet, S. & Mathews, T. (2011). Challenges associated with exposure to chronic trauma: Using a public health framework to foster resilient outcomes among youth. *Psychology in the Schools*, 48 (7). <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20584>

³Goodman, R. D., Miller, M. D., & West-Olatunji, C. A. (2012). Traumatic stress, socioeconomic status, and academic achievement among primary school students. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 4(3), 252-259. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0024912>

⁴Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. (2015). *Behavioral health trends in the United States: Results from the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (HHS Publication No. SMA 15-4927, NSDUH Series H-50). Retrieved from <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/>