



Delegate Anne R. Kaiser, Chair
Delegate Alonzo T. Washington, Vice Chair
Ways and Means Committee, House of Delegates
House Office Building, Room 131
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Bill: House Bill 277: State Department of Education – Guidelines on Trauma-Informed Approach

Position: Support

Dear Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, 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.

Nearly 35 million children have experienced at least one event that could lead to childhood trauma¹. The National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence conducted in 2011 indicated that 41.2% of children had been victims of physical assault within the last year. During the same time period, 5.6% of children and adolescents were sexually abused, with rates as high as 22.8% among adolescent females.

Childhood trauma has both immediate and long -term effects on individuals. Traumatic exposure has been associated with secondary conditions including post-traumatic stress disorder, separation anxiety, social anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and oppositional and aggressive behavior². Trauma also has a negative impact on academic functioning as it is predictive of poorer reading, math, and science achievement scores among elementary students³. Schools can, however, play a crucial role in decreasing the negative academic, behavioral, and psychological impact of a traumatic event on a child by adopting a trauma-informed approach. A trauma-informed approach is a way of providing services to children and families that facilitates the improved functioning of those negatively affected by trauma⁴.

MSPA is in strong support of House Bill 277 – Guidelines on Trauma-Informed Approach, 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,

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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/>