



Bill: Senate Bill 965 – Blueprint for Maryland’s Future - Revisions

Position: Support with Amendment

Dear Committee Chairs, Vice Chairs, and members:

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

MSPA strongly supported the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future implementation bill from the 2020 legislative session. The landmark legislation infuses much needed funds into Maryland’s public schools and provides for many programs that will be beneficial for our students and families. The bill is especially important as we continue to improve mental health supports for our students, who are struggling more than ever through the effects of an isolating pandemic.

However, we remain genuinely concerned about certain provisions in the legislation that are antithetical to the General Assembly’s stated goal of improving mental health support. Inexplicably, school psychologists, along with other non-classroom based educators and related services providers, were explicitly excluded from the career ladder and salary incentives included in the Blueprint. About 80% of school psychologists practicing in Maryland bargain under the same contract and salary scales as our teacher colleagues, however as we have our own national certification administered by our national governing body, we are not eligible for National Board Certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, on which these incentives are based. Without equitable opportunities for career advancement and salary improvements, similar to what will be offered to our colleagues, school systems across Maryland will continue to struggle to recruit and retain the most highly qualified school psychologists, restricting our students’ access to frontline mental health treatment along with other comprehensive services our schools rely on us to provide. This will also increase the reliance on less effective public-private partnerships to the detriment of our students.

School psychologists spend a *minimum* of three years in graduate education; a large percentage of our field holds doctoral degrees. It is extremely hard to sell these programs to qualified applicants, who delay entering the workforce and take on more student debt, when they are not incentivized financially, as teachers will be through this legislation.

MSPA welcomes the opportunity to work with you moving forward to develop a plan to ensure equitable career and salary opportunities for school psychologists. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Kyle Potter at legislative@mSPAonline.org or Rachael Faulkner at rfaulkner@policypartners.net or (410)-693-4000.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kyle Potter". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the typed name.

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