



Delegate Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building, Room 241
Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill: Senate Bill 286 – Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services - Modifications

Position: Support

Dear Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, and Members of the Committee:

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.

School psychologists may need to provide support when students are in a behavioral health crisis. We work collaboratively with local crisis response programs, and we may recommend these programs to families who need support outside of school hours. Effective programs that are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week are invaluable to families and communities.

The Maryland General Assembly established the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program in 2018 to expand behavioral health services statewide. Senate Bill 286 provides guidance to local behavioral health authorities who are reviewing grant proposals for the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program. Specifically, it prioritizes cultural competency, language access, community feedback, partnership with community services, and linking individuals in crisis to peer and family support services. Additionally, the bill expands the funding for the grant program through fiscal year 2025. Furthermore, Senate Bill 286 improves access to behavioral health care by providing authority to 9-1-1 and local mental health hotlines to dispatch mobile crisis teams. In a behavioral health emergency, mobile crisis teams may offer the best chance for a positive outcome. Access to crisis response programs that provide culturally competent and effective services, are adequately funded, and are accessible to families is necessary for the health of the students and community that we serve.

MSPA is in support of Senate Bill 286 and we respectfully urge a favorable vote. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please contact Rachael Faulkner at rfaulkner@policypartners.net or (410) 693-4000.

Respectfully submitted,

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