

Testimony in Support of House Bill 1096

Public Schools—School Psychologist Recruitment Program

House Ways and Means Committee

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1:30 pm

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Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association is in support of House Bill 1096, legislation that would establish the School Psychologist Recruitment Program within the Maryland State Department of Education.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

The immeasurable adverse impacts, either instigated by or further exacerbated by the COVID-19 global pandemic, present educators at all levels with extraordinary challenges. Not only must we diagnose and remediate any academic learning loss experienced by our students during this extended period of quarantine and virtual learning, but we must also address the untold yet growing trauma, mental, and behavioral health-related challenges. As we move toward re-opening schools for in-person instruction and given the ongoing personnel, resource, and support challenges facing our schools and districts, it stands to reason that previously stretched supports will be even more threadbare and hard to come by in the go forward. Currently Maryland does not have a sufficient enough mental and behavioral support personnel pipeline to come remotely close to the professionally recommended student to staff ratios let alone the number of staff required to meet the pandemic-related needs we face. As such, any efforts to ensure that we can



recruit, train, and deploy as many behavioral and mental health professionals in our schools as we begin our transition from virtual to in-person learning is critically important. We believe this legislation is a helpful step toward the overall goal.

We request a Favorable Report on House Bill 1096.