



AFT 340 AFL-CIO
Seton Business Park
5800 Metro Drive, 2nd Floor
Baltimore, MD 21215-3209

Testimony in Support of House Bill 0961
State Department of Education - School Psychologist Recruitment Program

House Ways and Means Committee

March 1, 2023

1:00pm

The Baltimore Teachers Union supports House Bill 0961, which would Establish the School Psychologist Recruitment Program within the State Department of Education to provide professional development programs and aid for a certification fee to school psychologists and individuals seeking to become school psychologists and to reimburse school psychologists for professional conference expenses.

The Baltimore Teachers Union represents 8,280 teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, clinicians, librarians, secretaries, community school site specialists, bus transportation aides, and many more school-based and central office support staff. We are 4 out of 5 workers in Baltimore City Public Schools, serving 75,595 students and their families. Our national union, the American Federation of Teachers, has over 1.7 million members in the United States and its territories.

The Baltimore Teachers Union currently represents 124 school psychologists. These clinical professionals provide a comprehensive continuum of services that support students both with and without identified disabilities.

The National Association of School Psychologists recommends a ratio of one school psychologist per 500 students in order to provide comprehensive school psychological services. With over 75,000 students, our district exceeds the recommended ratio significantly. Baltimore City is a district that experiences extremely high levels of poverty and trauma and our student population has high incidences of Adverse Childhood Experiences.

A 2017 study, by Behavioral Health System Baltimore, demonstrated that before COVID, over 30% of Baltimore youth felt sad or hopeless. 19% have seriously considered suicide and 16% planned out how they would do it. This is compared to a Maryland statewide average of 8.2% of young people who have seriously considered ending their lives. 58% of students in Maryland reported struggling with their mental health during the pandemic. A commitment to increasing the number of school psychologists is essential to meeting the needs of City Schools students,

but also to ensuring that teachers, administrators and other clinicians have adequate support in addressing student needs holistically.

Establishing a School Psychologist Recruitment Program within the State Department of Education is key to ensuring that our students receive the support they need from trained professionals, while also ensuring that school psychologists have the professional support and incentives that will enable their retention. **It is for these reasons that the BTU supports House Bill 0961 and urges a favorable report.**



Telephone: (410) 358-6600 Fax: (410) 358-2894 Website: www.baltimoreteachers.org