



**Committee:** Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

**Bill Number:** Senate Bill 545 – Primary and Secondary Education – Public School Employees– Salaries

**Hearing Date:** February 28, 2024

**Position:** Support w/Amendments

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The Maryland School Counselor Association (MSCA) supports *Senate Bill 545 – Primary and Secondary Education – Public School Employees – Salaries*. The bill provides salary increases for certain school personnel to improve recruitment and retention.

MSCA believes that school counselors may already be covered under the Blueprint legislation. However, there has been significant confusion in implementation of the Blueprint legislation. MSCA has made some progress in obtaining clarity. After MSCA wrote to the Accountability Implementation Board (AIB), the AIB acknowledged the career ladder covered school counselors.

We believe that Senate Bill 545 offers a clear path for acknowledgement that salary increases are needed to recruit and retain school counselors. Just like teachers, school counselors can obtain the additional credential of National Board Certification (NBC). We need to employ a comprehensive strategy, including salary incentives, to address the shortage of school counselors in Maryland. The Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education’s 2019 report adopted the nationally recommended ratio of 250 students per school counselor. However, per MSDE data, many of our counties are significantly above this recommended ratio, with several counties having over 1,000 students per counselor.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Jocelyn I. Collins at [jcollins@policypartners.net](mailto:collins@policypartners.net).