

SB 0499 MSPA Support Letter.pdf

Uploaded by: Bradley Leposa

Position: FAV



Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

February 27, 2024

Bill: Senate Bill 0499 – State Department of Education - School Psychologist Recruitment Program

Position: Support

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

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

School psychologists provide comprehensive psychological services to Maryland's students, including counseling, consultation, and assessment. We are acutely aware of the significant mental health needs of many of our students, and we are dedicated to helping to address those challenges. Unfortunately, the current Maryland school psychologist shortage prevents us from performing our role in a continuum of school and community based supports as envisioned by the National Center for School Mental Health (NCSMH).

At present, Maryland falls behind states like New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware in the number of school psychologists employed per student. In addition, Maryland's current school psychologist per student ratio of one school psychologist for every 1066 students falls far short of the National Association of School Psychologists' recommended ratio of 1 school psychologist for every 500 students. As a point of comparison, Massachusetts employs 1 school psychologist for every 686 students, and New York employs 1 school psychologist for every 629 students. As a result, many school psychologists simply cannot help many of the students who need our support.

SB 0499 will help address this crisis by providing the Maryland State Department of Education with a mechanism for recruiting and supporting more school psychologists. MSPA therefore urges a favorable report on SB 0499. If we can provide any further information or be of assistance, please contact us at legislative@mspaonline.org or Sarah Peters at speters@hbstrategies.us or 410-322-2320.

Respectfully submitted,

Bradley Leposa, PHD NCSP
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
Maryland School Psychologists' Association.

Ltr of support SB 499.pdf

Uploaded by: Jeffrey Lawson

Position: FAV



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CECIL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT SERVICES

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Jeffrey A. Lawson, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Diana B. Hawley
President, Board of Education

Written Testimony:

Senate Bill 0499 – State Department of Education – School Psychologist Recruitment Program

**Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Senator Brian Feldman, Chair**

February 26, 2024

Jeffrey A. Lawson, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Cecil County Public Schools

Please be advised that on behalf of Cecil County Public Schools, I am requesting that Senate Bill 0499 – State Department of Education – School Psychologist Recruitment Program be given a favorable recommendation by the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee.

As Superintendent of Cecil County Public Schools, I am submitting this letter with the full support of our five Board of Education members. We strongly support Senate Bill 0499 State Department of Education – School Psychologist Recruitment Program, which is scheduled for a committee hearing on February 28, 2024.

The premise of this legislation is to provide support to school psychologists, with the goal of increasing the number of school psychologists available to serve in all Maryland public schools. We have experienced a critical shortage of school psychologist candidates in recent years. Like shortages in other related professions, the school psychologist shortage has the potential to significantly undermine the availability of high-quality services to students, families, and schools.

School psychologists are uniquely qualified members of school teams who support students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to teach. School psychologists apply expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior to help students succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. Additionally, they help teachers reach struggling students, improve classroom management skills, and utilize instructional strategies that will engage all types of learners.

Senate Bill 0499 is critical in addressing the school psychologist shortage experienced in all counties across Maryland. Professional development support, along with financial support, toward school psychologists' certification results in supporting every student in Maryland

For these reasons, the Cecil County Public Schools supports Senate Bill 0499 and **requests a favorable committee report.**

Feb 27 2024 Testimony - HB1401 and SB499 Public Sc

Uploaded by: Katie Ridgway

Position: FAV

HB1401 and SB499 PUBLIC SCHOOLS - SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST RECRUITMENT PROGRAM

February 27, 2024
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

SUPPORT

Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) supports **HB1401 and SB499 Public Schools - School Psychologist Recruitment Program**.

Without reservation, I support HB1401 and SB499. The cross-filed bills establish the School Psychologist Recruitment Program to support school systems in Maryland in recruiting, hiring, and retaining well-trained school psychologists.

HCPS recognizes the importance of promoting a robust school psychologist recruitment, preparation, and retention system so that our students can access critical mental health support to reach academic, social, and developmental benchmarks and be ready for college and career success. Student mental health is of particular importance during this time when HCPS students are experiencing a multitude of social and emotional challenges. School psychologists collaborate with staff, parents/guardians, and the community to help students overcome barriers to learning. The emphasis on multi-tiered support systems, including Section 504 accommodations and restorative practices, further supports this effort and HCPS' Strategic Plan by emphasizing relationships, rigor, and readiness for all students. By removing barriers, providing resources, and teaching appropriate social-emotional skills, school psychologists help students gain the necessary tools to be productive citizens.

The competition for available school psychology candidates each year has become fierce, and school districts must become very creative in attracting interns and school psychology candidates when they are in short supply and highly desired. Competition has also been felt by the surge of private vendors getting into the school psychology recruitment business and offering candidates to school districts at inflated prices. School psychology is a critical shortage area, and local school systems would benefit from a Statewide recruitment effort.

In 2022-2023, HCPS conducted a Wellness Needs Assessment with more than 20,000 students participating. In this assessment, students highlighted mental health as a priority area across the board, with notable needs to support managing depression or coping with grief. Students also expressed the need to improve and increase services related to mental health and wellness for students. Please see the formal report of findings from this assessment here: <https://www.hcps.org/superintendent/docs/Executive-Summary-2022-2023-HCPS-Wellness-Needs-Assessment-Published-April-2023.pdf>.

February 27, 2024

Page Two

Support: HB1401 and SB499 Public Schools – School Psychologist Recruitment Program

HB1401 and SB499 reflect the Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services (also known as the NASP Practice Model), the official policy of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) regarding the delivery of comprehensive, integrated school psychological services. The model addresses the delivery of school psychological services within the context of educational programs and educational settings. The model describes the responsibilities of individual school psychologists and school systems to support comprehensive school psychological services. The model promotes a high level of student and systems-level services to meet all children and youth's academic, social, behavioral, mental health, and emotional needs. The model advocates for delivering comprehensive school psychological services to schools, students, and their families across ten domains of practice.

The ratio of school psychologists to students is critical to providing high-quality, comprehensive services and should not exceed one school psychologist for every 500 students. In some situations, the school psychologist-to-student ratio may need to be lower. These include, but are not limited to, situations in which school psychologists are assigned to work primarily with student populations that have intensive special needs (e.g., students with significant emotional or behavioral disorders or students with developmental disorders) or within communities that are disproportionately affected by poverty, trauma, and environmental stressors. Lower ratios may also be required when school psychologists are itinerant, recognizing the demands of traveling from school to school and developing and maintaining collaborative relationships in multiple sites.

In advocating for HB1401 and SB499, I support establishing Maryland's School Psychologist Recruitment Program. These bills are essential steps toward addressing the critical shortage of school psychologists, ensuring that our students receive the vital mental health support they need to thrive academically and emotionally. By investing in the recruitment, training, and retention of well-trained school psychologists, we not only enhance our educational systems but also equip our students with the necessary tools for college, career, and life success.

Respectfully Submitted:

Sean W. Bulson, Ed.D., Superintendent, Harford County Public Schools

SB499_MSEA_Lamb_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Lauren Lamb

Position: FAV

FAVORABLE
Senate Bill 499
State Department of Education - School Psychologist Recruitment
Program

Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
February 28, 2024

Lauren Lamb
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 499, 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.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. 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).

Given the ongoing personnel, resource, and support challenges facing our schools and districts, investing in the training and recruitment of student health professionals such as school psychologists is an essential step toward meeting students' needs. Our state does not currently have a sufficient mental and behavioral health professional pipeline to meet professionally recommended student-to-staff ratios, let alone the number of staff required to meet the needs of students. As such, efforts to ensure that we can train and recruit additional behavioral and mental health professionals in our schools, especially those from underrepresented communities, are important.



MSEA believes that concerted efforts must be made to recruit and train school psychologists, especially those from underrepresented groups, and we believe this legislation is a helpful step to that end. We will also continue to advocate for school psychologists and other student health professionals to be compensated as the essential staff they are.

We urge the Committee to issue a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 499.

SB499 FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Morgan Mills

Position: FAV

February 28, 2024

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and distinguished members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee,

NAMI Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a network of more than 58,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for people living with mental illnesses, their families, and the wider community.

NAMI MD acknowledges that serious shortages exist in the mental health professional workforce. We call on our state leaders to take immediate action to end the workforce shortage—particularly in children’s mental health services.

Undiagnosed, untreated, and inadequately treated mental illnesses significantly interfere with a student’s ability to learn, to grow, and to develop. Because children spend much of their productive time in school and services can be integrated into their regular daily routine, NAMI MD believes that both public and private elementary, middle, and high schools should provide and/or facilitate and sustain provision of appropriate mental health services, supports, and appropriate accommodations.

By removing barriers such as transportation, scheduling conflicts and stigma, school-based mental health services can help students access needed services during the school-day. Early identification and effective treatment for children and their families can make a difference in the lives of children with mental health conditions. We must take steps that enable all schools to increase access to appropriate mental health services. Delays in treatment lead to worsened conditions that are harder — and costlier — to treat.

1 in 6 US youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year. 57,000 Marylanders aged 12-17 have depression. 45.5% of Marylanders aged 12-17 who have depression did not receive any care in the last year. By creating incentive to recruit school psychologists (and individuals who are seeking to become school psychologists) through professional development opportunities, reimbursement for professional conferences, and offering coverage of fees charged by the National Association of School Psychologists for certification, we are addressing not only the serious workforce shortage we are facing, but we are investing in our school-aged children.

When we invest in children’s mental health to make sure they can get the right care at the right time, we improve the lives of children, youth, and families — and our communities.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.

Kathryn S. Farinholt
Executive Director
National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maryland

Contact: Morgan Mills
Compass Government Relations
Mmills@compassadvocacy.com

SB 499.School Psychologist Recruitment Program.pdf

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: FWA

BILL: Senate Bill 499
TITLE: State Department of Education - School Psychologist Recruitment Program
DATE: February 28, 2024
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports Senate Bill 499 and the objective to establish the School Psychologist Recruitment Program in the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to provide professional support to individuals who are, or are seeking to become, school psychologists in Maryland. In addition, MABE requests amendments to ensure a broader mission of MSDE's recruitment efforts to include other school-based behavioral and mental health professionals, including school counselors, school social workers, and school nurses.

MABE's support for this bill is grounded in the association's advocacy for the essential staffing and resources necessary to meet the mental and behavioral health needs of our nearly 900,000 public school students. The benefits and value of access to high quality school-based mental and behavioral health services for students and families, teachers and staff, and communities at large can hardly be overstated. Prior to the pandemic, evidence was mounting that additional resources were needed to provide the holistic array of social, emotional, behavioral and academic supports for all students. Then the pandemic saw a dramatic rise in students reporting experiencing anxiety and depression and other symptoms.

Today, students and staff are coping with these accumulated challenges in an environment of educator and other professional staffing shortages. Fortunately, Maryland is poised to address these needs through programs and initiatives such as the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports, Local Management Boards, and the federal funding to support further expansion of school-based mental and behavioral services.

The professional development program and supporting services provided under Senate Bill 499 would significantly contribute to the recruitment and retention of school psychologists and those seeking to become school psychologists.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 499, with the amendments described above.

SB0499 Howard Co BOE Testimony 022824 for EEE - Ps

Uploaded by: Staff Howard County

Position: FWA



**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate,
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 28, 2024**



**Board of Education
of Howard County**

Jennifer Swickard Mallo, *Chair*

Yun Lu, Ph.D., *Vice Chair*

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Lamia Ayaz
Student Member

William J. Barnes
*Acting Superintendent,
Secretary/Treasurer*

SB0499: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

State Department of Education - School Psychologist Recruitment Program

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **SB0499 State Department of Education - School Psychologist Recruitment Program** with amendments to ensure sufficient funding is provided to support the goals of the bill.

SB0499 establishes a School Psychologist Recruitment Program with the purpose of providing professional support to school psychologists in the state as well as individuals seeking to become one. Professional development opportunities may include virtual courses or webinars, mentoring or peer collaboration programs, and support materials.

Howard County Public School System's School Psychology staff indicate this bill has the potential to attract candidates from out-of-state who wish to work and live in Maryland. As social-emotional well-being of students continues to be a growing area of concern for school systems, the demand for certified professionals will also increase.

One area of concern with the bill, however, is the provision indicating financial support would come in the form of reimbursement for professional development services and National Association of School Psychologists credentialing subject to funding availability. In order to be a true draw for school psychologists, staff recommends the fees should be covered without the need to provide payment upfront and a guarantee of reimbursement.

Prior analysis by the Department of Legislative Services estimated if aid were provided to 100 individuals for initial certification under the National Association of School Psychologists at the non-member/maximum rate of \$360, expenditures could increase by \$36,000. Another \$247,000 annually was estimated as necessary to reimburse school psychologists for attending conferences. Specific amendments to address guaranteed coverage of payment include striking "subject to funding availability" in line 7 on page 3 as well as "consistent with the amount provided in the State budget for the Program" in lines 17 through 18 on page 3, and instead requiring the Governor to annually allocate funds as estimated for the program.

With these amendments, we urge a FAVORABLE report of SB0499 from this Committee.

SB 499 Letter of Information 2024_02_26.pdf

Uploaded by: Dr. Carey Wright

Position: INFO

BILL: SB0499 - State Department of Education – School Psychologist Recruitment Program

DATE: February 28, 2024

SUBJECT: Letter of Information

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

POSITION: Information only

CONTACT: Akilah Alleyne
akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov
410-767-0504

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) provides this information for your consideration regarding Senate Bill (SB) 499 – *State Department of Education – School Psychologist Recruitment Program*.

SB 499 establishes the “School Psychologist Recruitment Program” within MSDE. The purpose of the program is to provide professional support and professional development to school psychologists and those seeking to become school psychologists in the State.

SB 499 Implementation

The implementation of the newly established School Psychologist Recruitment Program, as outlined in SB 499, would require MSDE to provide professional support to certified school psychologists within the State. This support would extend to individuals who are either already certified or are seeking certification as school psychologists. MSDE would be tasked with the development and administration of virtual courses or webinars, the creation of mentoring and peer collaboration programs, and the provision of support materials. Additionally, MSDE would be responsible for reimbursing an amount equivalent to the certification fee charged by the National Association of School Psychologists.

SB 499 mandates that MSDE maintain a clearinghouse of best practices for school psychologists to aid in their professional development. It also requires MSDE to communicate and promote upcoming opportunities and resources available to certified school psychologists. Furthermore, the School Psychologist Recruitment Program, under SB 499, is required to reimburse certified school psychologists for expenses related to attending professional development conferences. Under the provisions of SB 499, MSDE would be required to adopt regulations governing the maximum reimbursement amount from the School Psychologist Recruitment Program, the procedures for individuals to submit applications to the program, and the criteria for selecting aid recipients.

MSDE does not have the capacity to implement this bill with existing resources. To fulfill the requirements of SB 499, MSDE would need to employ a full-time certified school psychologist to manage all fiscal and programmatic aspects of the program. This would include the development and administration of virtual professional development courses, the design of mentoring or peer collaboration programs, the development and provision of support materials, the creation of regulations governing the maximum reimbursement amount, and the development of application procedures and selection criteria for aid recipients.

In addition to staffing costs, MSDE estimates that consulting services would be needed to develop the required training courses and to establish the clearinghouse.

Reimbursements for School Psychologists

Implementation of the provisions of SB 499 would increase agency expenditures to provide reimbursements for school psychologists attending professional conferences and providing aid for up to 100 individuals annually.

MSDE requests that you consider this information in your deliberation of **SB 499**. If additional information is needed, please contact Akilah Alleyne, Ph.D., Executive Director of Governmental Affairs, at 410-767-0504, or akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov.