

SENATE BILL 679

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By: **Senator Conway**

Introduced and read first time: January 31, 2014

Assigned to: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs and Finance

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Task Force on Community–Partnered School Mental Health**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing the Task Force on Community–Partnered School
4 Mental Health; providing for the composition, chair, and staffing of the Task
5 Force; prohibiting a member of the Task Force from receiving certain
6 compensation, but authorizing the reimbursement of certain expenses;
7 requiring the Task Force to study and make recommendations regarding the
8 provision and financing of community–partnered school mental health
9 programs and services; requiring the Task Force to report its findings and
10 recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before a
11 certain date; providing for the termination of this Act; and generally relating to
12 the Task Force on Community–Partnered School Mental Health.

13 Preamble

14 WHEREAS, One in five children experiences a diagnosable and treatable
15 mental health disorder, and only one in five of those children is able to access
16 necessary services due to a variety of factors; and

17 WHEREAS, Behavioral and emotional issues can act as a barrier to academic
18 success and high school graduation, as well as create disciplinary and attendance
19 problems in school; and

20 WHEREAS, Recent events in Maryland and around the country have ignited a
21 sense of urgency among state leaders and policymakers to address mental health and
22 safety in our schools; and

23 WHEREAS, Although Maryland has established an extensive array of children’s
24 mental health evidence–based practices delivered in home and community settings,
25 the mental health system of care lacks the full capacity needed to ensure the delivery
26 of care to all youth in Maryland with mental health needs; and

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 WHEREAS, While school-based social workers, counselors, and psychologists
2 are instrumental in preventing and managing emotional-behavioral problems, these
3 professionals may be limited to providing services only to youth in special education,
4 and are without the necessary infrastructure, including child psychiatric care and
5 extended hours, to fully support student mental health needs; and

6 WHEREAS, Schools without the necessary community-partnered
7 infrastructure to support student mental health may rely excessively on exclusionary
8 disciplinary practices, including suspension, expulsion, and arrest, contributing to the
9 widening of the State's achievement gap; and

10 WHEREAS, Schools can provide a safe, secure, and accessible base for
11 improving mental health outcomes by serving as a hub for community behavioral
12 health providers to augment existing school services in order to support a full
13 continuum of student mental health services; and

14 WHEREAS, Community-partnered school mental health offers a
15 well-supported mechanism to improve a student's mental health, academic
16 functioning, and safety; and

17 WHEREAS, The community-partnered school mental health model leverages
18 an array of funding streams, including mental health, substance use, juvenile services,
19 child welfare, and others to support the education system in addressing the mental
20 health needs of students; now, therefore,

21 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
22 MARYLAND, That:

23 (a) There is a Task Force on Community-Partnered School Mental Health.

24 (b) The Task Force consists of the following members:

25 (1) the State Superintendent of Schools, or the State Superintendent's
26 designee;

27 (2) the Director of the Office of Child and Adolescent Services in the
28 Maryland Hygiene Administration, or the Director's designee; and

29 (3) the following members, appointed by the Governor:

30 (i) one school psychologist;

31 (ii) one school social worker;

32 (iii) one representative of a local education agency experienced in
33 providing community-partnered school mental health services;

1 (iv) two individuals experienced in providing
2 community-partnered school mental health services;

3 (v) two representatives of the national Center for School Mental
4 Health at the University of Maryland School of Medicine;

5 (vi) one representative of the Mental Health Association of
6 Maryland;

7 (vii) one representative of Advocates for Children and Youth;

8 (viii) one representative of the Maryland Coalition of Families for
9 Children's Mental Health;

10 (ix) one representative of the Maryland Chapter of the National
11 Alliance on Mental Illness; and

12 (x) one representative of the Maryland Disability Law Center.

13 (c) The Task Force shall elect a chair from among the members of the Task
14 Force.

15 (d) The State Department of Education shall provide staff for the Task Force.

16 (e) A member of the Task Force:

17 (1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Task Force; but

18 (2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard
19 State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

20 (f) The Task Force shall:

21 (1) study the prevalence of existing community-partnered school
22 mental health programs in the State;

23 (2) collect and evaluate data on the efficacy of community-partnered
24 school mental health programs in the State and other states;

25 (3) identify fiscally sustainable models of providing
26 community-partnered school mental health services, including maximizing
27 third-party billing for mental health services and supplemental funding for ancillary
28 services; and

29 (4) make recommendations regarding:

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1 (i) policy initiatives to promote the expansion of
2 community-partnered school mental health programs in the State;

3 (ii) strategies to better equip mental health providers to partner
4 with schools, including integration into existing multitiered systems of support;

5 (iii) strategies for community behavioral health providers to help
6 improve student safety, reduce disciplinary removals and school-based arrests, and
7 facilitate pathways to early identification and intervention of violent behavior and
8 serious mental illness;

9 (iv) best practices for conducting quality assessment and
10 improvement activities and measuring outcomes to document the impact of
11 programming on mental health, behavior, and academic indicators; and

12 (v) any other relevant issues identified by the Task Force.

13 (g) On or before December 15, 2014, the Task Force shall report its findings
14 and recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State
15 Government Article, the General Assembly.

16 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
17 June 1, 2014. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and, at the end of May 31,
18 2015, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act shall be
19 abrogated and of no further force and effect.