

**BILL:** House Bill 844  
**TITLE:** Public Schools – School Psychologists – Reports  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**DATE:** March 20, 2019  
**COMMITTEE:** Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's local boards of education, opposes House Bill 844.

First, local boards of education are resolved that the highly qualified professionals working in Maryland's public schools are to be credited with our students' nationally recognized successes in the classroom. School counselors are integral to the success of the schools in which they work, and uniquely qualified to provide the counseling and guidance services their title connotes.

Maryland's public school psychologists are held to high certification standards. State regulations stipulate that a school counselor must have a master's or higher degree in school psychology and under a set of optional provisions, may also have a Nationally Certified School Psychologist certificate, or a master's or higher degree plus 1,200 hours of internship in school psychology. In these ways, Maryland has adopted high standards specific to the profession of school psychology. At the same time, school psychologists are one of many types of professional school employee; all of whom are represented collectively by employee organizations through negotiated agreements.

MABE opposes House Bill 844 because it would require each local school system to submit reports including not only specified information on the current ratio of school psychologists to students in each public school, but also strategies to, by October 1, 2020, (1) have at least one school psychologist at schools with fewer than 700 students, and (2) for schools with 700 students or more students, have a ratio of not less than one school psychologist for every 700 students. Local boards are very concerned that the bill establishes a significant, unfunded, and therefore unrealistic, mandate to report on strategies that may not be realistic, and therefore not responsible, to adopt.

Again, MABE opposes the strategy-setting and ratio-based provisions of House Bill 844 as contrary to local school system prerogative to adopt policies and allocate resources accordingly.

Lastly, MABE believes that the title of the bill and the fiscal note reflect inaccuracies that belie the true intent and meaning of this legislation. The bill is not about "reports" but rather "strategies to increase the number of school psychologists;" and the "Local Effect" reported as "not substantially affected" will clearly be affected, or the mandated strategy wouldn't be required to include "any additional State or local funding needed by the local school system."

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 844.