

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2019 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

House Bill 844  
Ways and Means

(Delegate Reilly, *et al.*)

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Public Schools – School Psychologists – Reports

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This bill requires each local school system to submit an interim and final report on school psychologists in the local school system. The reports must include specified information including the current ratio of school psychologists to students in each public school and include strategies (including any additional State and local funding) to, by October 1, 2020, (1) have at least one school psychologist at schools with less than 750 students, and (2) for schools with 750 students or more students, have a ratio of no less than 1 school psychologist for every 750 students. Each local school system must submit an interim report by July 1, 2020, and a final report by December 1, 2020. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2019, and terminates June 30, 2021.**

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** None.

**Local Effect:** Local school system expenditures are not substantially affected. Most school systems currently respond to an annual survey by Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). It is assumed that local school systems can devote current resources to developing strategies, plans, and policy options for purposes of the required reports.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Current Law/Background:** According to State regulations (COMAR) a “school psychologist” is an individual who is certified to provide psychological services to children in a public or State-approved nonpublic school setting. The school psychologist supervises

interns and psychometrists. COMAR specifies four options for meeting the education requirements for certification as a school psychologist. According to COMAR, the School Psychology Program is a comprehensive continuum of services and activities based on psychological principles. The goal of the program is to prevent or remediate educational, emotional, or behavioral problems by identifying, analyzing, and reporting psychoeducational needs through consultation, observation, or through psychological and educational assessment. Interventions to meet student needs may include:

- consultation with school staff and parents on issues involving psychological principles as applicable to program and curriculum development, the learning process, and student development;
- group or individual counseling with a student or parents;
- consultation with private and community resources and the school to integrate psychoeducational data for student adjustment; and
- staff development activities to help apply psychological principles to education.

The National Association of School Psychologists indicates that while generally the ratio for schools should not exceed 1,000 students to 1 school psychologist, when school psychologists are providing comprehensive and preventive services (*i.e.*, evaluations, consultation, individual/group counseling, crisis response, behavioral interventions, etc.), this ratio should not exceed 500 to 700 students for 1 school psychologist in order to ensure quality of student outcomes. Similarly, the interim report of the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education indicates an industry-recognized standard of 500 to 700 students per psychologist. As of October 2018, there were approximately 798 public school psychological personnel, including psychologists at the central office level, ranging from less than 5 in each of eight counties, to over 100 each in Baltimore City and Baltimore and Montgomery counties.

The statewide average annual salary for public school psychological personnel was \$90,300 as of October 2018; ranging from an average of \$63,100 in Cecil County to an average of \$109,200 in Howard County. According to responses from 18 out of 24 local school systems to MSDE's 2017-2018 School Psychology Survey, the statewide average ratio of students per school psychologist was 1,240 to 1, ranging from 800 to 1 in Calvert County to 1,700 to 1 in Queen Anne's County.

## **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Baltimore City Public Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools; National Association of School Psychologists; Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Legislative Services

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