The Anne Arundel County Board of Education SUPPORTS House Bill 1522 - Needs Assessment for Student School Based Behavioral Health Counseling Services Throughout the Year. This bill would require the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to conduct a needs assessment for student school-based behavioral health counseling services throughout the school year.

This bill is timely as school systems are currently experiencing an ongoing increase in the number of students in need of mental and behavioral health supports. House Bill 1522 would help school systems to develop a mechanism to identify students exhibiting the need for these supports. The needs assessment would include (1) an assessment of the need for behavioral health services for each school district; (2) a description of the types of services offered to children with behavioral health needs; (3) methods of paying for such services; (4) documentation of the number of children with behavioral health needs who are being provided services, including the type of services and the conditions being treated; (5) the costs to provide services to all students who have needs; (6) the obstacles to providing services to all children; and (7) recommendations for removing obstacles to the provision of services to students with behavioral health needs. The needs assessment conducted by DHMH and MSDE would greatly assist school systems to identify areas of concern and would also help them to determine how best to move forward in meeting the behavioral health needs of their students. Anne Arundel County Public Schools believes that the first step to gaining additional services for our students is to conduct a comprehensive analysis such as the assessment established under this bill.

Accordingly, the Anne Arundel County Board of Education respectfully requests a FAVORABLE committee report on House Bill 1522.