



William E. Kirwan, Chair
Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education
Maryland Department of Legislative Services
90 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

September 14, 2018

Dear Chairman Kirwan:

The National Association of Social Workers and our Social Work in Schools Committee would like to commend you and your commissioners on the very important work which you are doing. You have taken on a critical task for the benefit of the future of our state.

There is a specific aspect of the report from Workgroup 4 which we would like to address. NASW-MD appreciates the recommended language under Element 4a, which allocates per pupil funding that may be used to hire additional social workers in schools. Unfortunately, as schools have many competing priorities with regard to funding and historically, not all school systems have had the resources to hire social workers, **we strongly request that the Commission amend Element 4a to permit schools under the “Concentration of Poverty” threshold to use their fixed amount funding to hire health care practitioners, which would include clinical social workers.**

As currently drafted schools may only use the fixed amount funding to hire a health care practitioner if they first become a community school. Given the requirements set forth by the Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018 regarding the provision and referral of mental health services in schools, we believe dedicated funding is critical to full implementation. Requiring schools to first become a community school will create an additional barrier for those schools that have already identified the need of a clinical social worker, but do not have adequate resources to sustain a position. **We hope this requirement can be reviewed.**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daphne L. McClellan".

Daphne L. McClellan, PhD, MSW
NASW-MD Executive Director