

## FOR THE STATES NEEDING TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN GRADUATES

BILL TITLE: School Psychologists Are Essential to Student Success

A BILL concerning the shortage of qualified school psychologists in public schools.

### SEC. 1: FINDINGS

The (general assembly/state legislature) finds that:

- (a) School psychologists are part of a comprehensive program to meet student needs, consistent with 20 U.S.C. Sec. 1400 [the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* and 20 U.S.C. Sec. 6301 [the *Every Student Succeeds Act*].
- (b) School psychologists are an integral part of the school team and support student learning, mental health and behavior to help students achieve academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally.
- (c) The National Association of School Psychologists recommends a maximum ratio of 500 to 700 students per school psychologists in order to provide a comprehensive range of school psychological services.
- (d) There is a shortage of school psychologists in (X state), with an estimated ratio of XXXX.
- (e) A shortage of school psychologists across the state of (X) jeopardizes the state's ability to provide essential services and supports to students, schools, and communities.
- (f) Data indicate that shortages of school psychologists will persist into the future.
- (g) There is an insufficient number of credentialed school psychology graduates produced by the state's higher education institutions to fill existing gaps.
- (h) Initiatives designed to promote and support the education and preparation of school psychologists can help mitigate the problem of a shortage.
- (i) Research and best practice show that after three years of employment within a school, school psychologists become imbedded in their community, resulting in lower turnover within the profession.
- (j) [PLACEHOLDER for a data element/finding relevant to XX state regarding how students benefit/school climate improves etc.] when schools are adequately staffed, and the community is supported.

### SEC. 2: PURPOSES

- (a) To address the shortage of school psychologists in X state.
- (b) To address the shortage of school psychologists in the higher education pipeline.
- (c) To improve the academic, behavioral, and social emotional well-being of children and youth by increasing access to high quality school-employed mental and behavioral health professionals.
- (d) To ensure the state fulfills its obligations to state and federal laws that address students with disabilities, school safety, school climate and social and emotional learning.

**SEC. 3: DEFINITIONS**

- (a) **Graduate program:** a program accredited by the state that is dedicated to providing an organized program of graduate preparation in school psychology and provides no less than 60 graduate semester hours (or the equivalent) and includes coursework and experience relevant to both education and psychology. Coursework must advance knowledge in:
1. Data collection and analysis, and data-based decision making;
  2. Student assessment and evaluation;
  3. Academic programs and instructional support;
  4. Multitiered systems of support to address students' academic, social–emotional, and mental and behavioral health needs including:
    - A. Universal screening and early identification,
    - B. prevention and intervention services,
    - C. progress monitoring, and
    - D. providing a range of increasingly intensive services based on student need;
  5. School-wide practices to promote student learning, resilience and risk factors, and crisis preparedness, response, and recovery;
  6. Mental health interventions;
  7. Consultation and collaboration;
  8. Family–school–community collaboration;
  9. Diversity in development and learning;
  10. Program evaluation and research;
  11. Professional ethics;
  12. Systems; and
  13. All relevant local, state and federal laws including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the requirements specific to the role of the school psychologist.
- (b) **High-needs district:** A high-needs district is a district that fails to meet the ratio of employing one school psychologist for every 1,000 students.
- (c) **Living wage:** A living wage is the amount of money needed to provide for annual basic needs for an individual to live above poverty and is determined by the state.
- (d) **National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) approved or accredited program:** a program that has met national standards for graduate preparation in school psychology based on rigorous peer review. Graduates from NASP approved or accredited programs immediately qualify for the Nationally Certified School Psychologist credential.
- (e) **Program desert:** A state lacking in the availability of graduate programs (including insufficient faculty) within institutes of higher education to prepare and graduate eligible candidates at a rate that would adequately provide school psychologists to the field based on need, including current shortages and the rates of attrition and retirement.
- (f) **School psychologist:** a credentialed professional, with the title of “school psychologist” who is a uniquely qualified member of a school team that supports student and teacher success by:
1. Applying expertise in mental health, learning and behavior to help students succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally;
  2. Partnering with families, teachers, school administrators, and other professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments that strengthen connections between home, school, and the community.
- (g) **School psychology internship:** a culminating and immersive field-supervised experience in which the primary focus is on providing high-quality experiences, attainment of comprehensive school psychology competencies, and integration and application of the full range of domains of school psychology. Minimum requirements for an internship must include:
1. At least 1,200 hours in duration over the course of an academic year;

2. At least 600 hours of the internship must occur in a school-based setting as defined by NASP standards;
3. Opportunities and supervision in a broad range of direct and indirect school psychological services;
4. Supervision must be conducted by a credentialed school psychologist or a professional appropriately credentialed for the internship setting.

**Rule of Construction:** All definitions in this Act apply only to the programs authorized therein. [NOTE. This clarifies how to interpret terms that may have federal/other definitions.]

#### **SEC. 4: SUPPORTING STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES AND LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES TO PLACE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS IN HIGH NEEDS DISTRICTS**

- (a) Graduate school program(s) for school psychologists to serve high-needs districts.
  1. The SEA shall provide grant funding to institutions of higher education in or near high-needs districts to establish or enhance graduate programs in school psychology; and
  2. In prioritizing such grants, the SEA shall take into consideration the institution of higher education's ability to establish or expand a graduate program in school psychology based on existing faculty, the ability to recruit new faculty and additional infrastructural needs as determined by the SEA.
- (b) Coordination with local districts to place school psychology practica students and interns in high needs districts.
  1. Internships:
    - A. The SEA shall coordinate with LEAs to identify high needs districts that have qualified supervisors who can support school psychology internships; and
    - B. The SEA shall provide funding for full-time, one-year internships equal to **75%** of the entry-level salary of a school psychologist in a high needs district.
  2. Loan forgiveness: Upon completion of five years of employment in a high needs district, the state shall forgive the school loans accrued by the school psychologist in pursuit of his or her degree.
- (c) Reciprocity across states:
  1. A SEA shall accept credentialing from any state that meets the minimum requirements for school psychology certification put forth by the original employing state. Should the credentialing requirements from the original employing state differ from the SEA's requirements, the professional should be given the opportunity to meet those requirements equivalent to [STATE LAW CITE/SECTION FOR TEACHER CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS] while maintaining an active, provisional, and temporary credential as recognized by the state for a period of no less than 180 days.
- (d) Recognition of the Nationally Certified School Psychologist credential:
  1. A school psychologist who maintains an active Nationally Certified School Psychologist credential shall be considered as having met the credentialing requirements and is eligible to work within the state
  2. A school psychologist who maintains an active Nationally Certified School Psychologist credential shall be considered as having met the state credential renewal requirements.
  3. The state shall provide an annual stipend of XXXX for school psychologists who maintain an active Nationally Certified School Psychologist Credential and are employed by a public school in the state.
- (e) Establishing statewide recruitment efforts to meet recommended ratios for school psychologists, the SEA shall:
  1. establish an online, publicly accessible job portal for employers, school psychologists, and school psychologist candidates.

**SEC. 5: STUDY**

- (a) The SEA shall conduct an annual collection of data on the number of school psychologists (i.e., professionals providing school psychological services under the professional title of “school psychologist”) who are employed:
1. full-time by a school or district,
  2. part-time by a school or district,
  3. by an outside organization and provides school psychological services as a school psychologist in a school or district, or
  4. as a full or part-time contract employee providing services as a school psychologist in a school or district.
- (b) Data shall be:
1. used to inform the SEA regarding high needs districts;
  2. used to inform SEA decision making regarding the effective use of state funds to recruit, train, and retain school psychologists;
  3. used to help identify and target funding needs;
  4. made publicly available on the state department of education website; and
  5. reported annually to the state legislature.