



Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC)
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 21, 2022

TO: The Honorable Members of the Delaware General Assembly

FROM: Terri Hancharick, Vice Chairperson
GACEC

RE: **House Bill No. 300 Middle School Mental Health Services**

The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) has reviewed **House Bill No. 300**, which will create mental health services units for school districts and charter schools serving students in grades 6-8. The bill will also provide increasing funding for social workers or counselors each year from 2023 to 2025. Council **supports** the proposed legislation. However, Council would like to share one observation.

The proposed act:

stipulates that funds shall only be provided at a level necessary to satisfy the ratio requirements, and funding levels shall be determined after considering funds already received from the Opportunity Fund or any other funding already applied toward mental health support personnel. Further, funds allocated under this Act may not supplant mental health funding from another source unless ratios are already met and an approved application for supplanted funds is granted by the Department of Education.

This may mean that schools already funding mental health providers at the ratios required under this bill would not receive additional funding. While the bill describes a process where schools could request to use this funding to supplant other funds already used for mental health services, there is no process for schools to request using this funding to supplement funds already used for mental health services if the district has already met the baseline established in this bill. It may be beneficial to permit schools to request to use these funds to supplement existing funding if there is need for more extensive mental health services in their school or district.

Council recommends the legislation be amended to provide more funding based on demonstrated need above the ratios established in the bill. As written, if a school district or charter has greater need for mental health supports than the required ratios in this bill, and is already funding mental

health support at these ratios, that school district or charter school would not benefit from this funding.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our support of this proposed legislation. Please feel free to contact Pam Weir or me at the GACEC office should you have any questions on our comments.