



Montgomery County Mental Health Advisory Committee

January 26, 2022

Senator Bill Ferguson  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

SB94

Dear President Ferguson;

The Mental Health Advisory Committee of Montgomery County (MHAC), as mandated by the State of Maryland, is dedicated to monitoring the delivery of mental health services to county residents. The Committee also collaborates with community partners to advise and advocate for an effective comprehensive mental health system of care for all. Preventing suicide and expanding access to mental health services and interventions is among our highest priorities.

As such, we are writing to express our support for SB 94 to establish the Maryland Suicide Fatality Review Committee to identify and address the factors contributing to suicide deaths and facilitate system changes to prevent suicides. This Committee would conduct confidential investigations after deaths with uncertain causes, as is recommended by the U.S. National Strategy for Suicide Prevention.

Working collaboratively with other existing state fatality review committees (e.g. the Child and Overdose Fatality Review Teams), this committee will review fatalities to determine risk factors, lapses in systemic responses, barriers to safety, and strategies for prevention. The Committee will share aggregated data and findings with public health authorities, disseminate statistical findings, and make corresponding recommendations to policymakers, health care providers, health care facilities, and the public.

Suicide remains the tenth leading cause of death in the U.S. Among younger Americans, suicide rates have been increasing over the last decade, particularly in minority groups, with a 5% jump among 25- to 34-year-olds in 2020 (CDC, 2021). This legislation would establish this Committee to examine the circumstances surrounding possible suicide deaths and allow the committee to identify red flags, trends, risk factors, current best practices in suicide prevention, lapses in systemic responses, and barriers to safety and well-being, and other strategies to prevent deaths by suicide. We urge you to support SB 94 establishing the Maryland Suicide Fatality Review Committee, to ensure proper collection of this critical data and ensure it is used to inform policy making, replicate best practices, and promote stronger prevention efforts across Maryland.

Behavioral Health and Crisis Services • Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Services

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[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhs](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhs)

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/vsrr/VSRR016.pdf>

<https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/national-strategy-for-suicide-prevention-overview.pdf>

We strongly urge you support this bill and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Helga Luest". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Helga Luest, Chair