



Montgomery County Mental Health Advisory Committee

January 26, 2022

HB56

Delegate Luke Clippinger
101 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Clippinger:

The Montgomery County Mental Health Advisory Committee (MHAC) is writing in support of HB 56 – Commission on Student Behavioral Health and Mental Health Treatment.

MHAC was established to advise the Montgomery County Executive and the County Council on matters concerning mental health. Our work includes providing citizen oversight to all state-funded mental health agencies serving Montgomery County and serving as an advocate for a comprehensive mental health system for persons of all ages. The Committee helps to ensure that publicly-funded mental health services are responsive to local needs, accountable to the citizenry and accessible to those in need. Our work includes closely following State and County legislative proposals relating to mental health. MHAC is comprised of citizen members who serve three-year terms without compensation that includes practicing physicians in the County, mental health professionals in the County who are not physicians and individuals who are currently receiving or have in the past received mental health services as well as agency members that includes the Department of Health and Human Services, Montgomery County Public schools, and the Department of Juvenile Services.

The MHAC supports Maryland House Bill 56 - the Commission on Student Behavioral Health and Mental Health Treatment. This legislation will establish the Commission on Student Behavioral Health and Mental Health Treatment to study, evaluate, update, and revise guidelines for student behavioral health and mental health treatment and practices in general, including school-based health centers.

Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health challenges facing youth were of great concern. However, the pandemic has had unparalleled impacts on the mental health of Maryland's youth. As young people continue to face physical isolation, ongoing uncertainty, helplessness, fear and grief. Many have struggled with depression, anxiety and thoughts of suicide.

Students who receive mental and behavioral health support achieve better academically and in life according to The National Association of School Psychologists. Student Behavioral Health Centers are in a unique position not only to identify mental health problems among children and adolescents but also to provide treatment or links to appropriate services. If we wish to improve the mental health, resilience, and wellbeing of children, adolescents, and young adults in Maryland, we must support them in educational settings and address the economic and social

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barriers that contribute to poor mental health for young people. It is vital to ensure that every young person in need in Maryland has access to high-quality, affordable, and culturally competent mental health care.

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

Sincerely,

Helga Luest, Chair