

Emma Content

Testimony for Hearing on HB 1405

3-5-2020

Annapolis, Maryland

In my spring semester of 2015, I walked into St. Mary's campus wellness center and was refused treatment by an unlicensed 'therapist' because I voiced my hesitation about doing art therapy as a form of treatment. This is the same professional who, without any license to practice psychiatry, told me to increase the dosage of my medication, which I was told later by my psychiatrist would result in serotonin syndrome.

I have two minutes, so I'll not mince words. St. Mary's mental health services are substandard at best. Only 4 counselors. (Counselors, not therapists) for close to 2500 students. One psychiatrist who appears once a week and takes up to 5 weeks to schedule with, no matter how urgent the issue. Not open on weekends. The President and Dean have made it clear funding for student health is not a priority and have said so explicitly at roundtable discussions with students.

In my time at SMCM I have watched:

My friend Sky quit halfway through a semester because he could not focus in class after running out of ADHD meds which could not be refilled by the psychiatrist for another 2-3 weeks.

My friend Julianna be prescribed medication by the school psychiatrist that was out of her insurance network and too expensive for her to pay for.

I have seen countless students have appointments cancelled at the last minute due to understaffing.

I've seen just as many students break down in tears in the lobby because there was no one to help them.

I've seen one of my classmates who couldn't receive treatment due to limited hours and understaffing attempt to throw themselves off a window in an attempt to take their own life, only to be chased and wrestled into a police car without an advocate to stand by them.

I watched my own grades slip after not getting help from the wellness center and ended up having a panic attack so bad I hyperventilated, passed out, and received a concussion from my fall. When I returned after taking medical leave my senior year for similar issues, I was given

every excuse not to come back by the administration in what I suspect was an effort to silence my advocacy for students with mental illness.

The dean of students gave me a clear message to “shut up and sit down” when speaking out against lack of funding for student health.

The way SMCM treats its students with mental health diagnoses is appalling. It should not be happening. Not at SMCM, not at any state funded institution. Colleges must strive to treat students as students, as people who deserve basic respect.