

HB 1504
Task Force to Study Access to Mental Health Care in Higher Education
Position: Support
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Hello,

My name is Brendel Mitchell and I graduated from Towson University in 2018. Since earning my degree I have worked with children and adults on the autism spectrum and now I currently work for the Maryland Coalition of Families as a Youth Engagement Specialist.

I have battled depression, anxiety, ADHD, and PTSD since I was a teenager due to both genetics and various traumas. While I was in college, my mental health was at its worst it has ever been to this day. I was living in survival mode.

The reason I am standing here today, why I have found professional success, and why I was ultimately successful in college is in large part due to the mental health services I accessed both on campus and off.

Towson University offers students the ability to make emergency same-day counseling appointments. Mostly every student I know, including myself, works themselves until they crash or breakdown...often the pressure to succeed takes over the desire to take care of yourself until you're in a moment of crisis, on top of that students deal with very real personal life issues that also affect their mental health.

For me, when I was in crisis, it felt like I was drowning and couldn't pull myself up. At one point in college, I was suicidal and so afraid of myself I thought I needed to be hospitalized. Having rapid access care available on campus is 1000% necessary for these reasons.

My university, like many other universities, has counseling limitations for students... I believe you can see an on campus counselor up to 3-5 times before having to look for outside providers. This is extremely problematic, my friends and I were so put off with this policy. Why can't we receive on going counseling at our university? It already takes so much to work up the courage to reach out for help and agree to talk to a stranger about your vulnerabilities...that 3-5 appointment limitation deters students from receiving on going help outside of campus or they see no point in even receiving counseling on campus altogether. I didn't have a car, I didn't have a job for half the time I was in school...outside mental health care didn't seem possible under these circumstances.

I didn't get connected with DSS (Disability Support Services) until my last year and a half of school and even the accommodations I received didn't address the type of support I needed. I graduated a year late, solely due to my severe mental health issues. Expanding mental health care services on campus, and making sure what is being offered fits the needs of the student population, could have made a huge difference in how my college career played out.