



March 12, 2020

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West, Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – SB 1015: Task Force to Study Access to Mental Health Care in Higher Education

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) is a state medical organization whose physician members specialize in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, MPS works to ensure available, accessible and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strives through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branch of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland excluding the D.C. suburbs, MPS represents over 700 psychiatrists as well as physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS supports Senate Bill 1504: Task Force to Study Access to Mental Health Care in Higher Education (SB 1015). Two and four-year institutions of higher education traditionally evaluate university-based mental health care through the prism of what it costs the institution. Through that lens, providing wellness care is much more cost-effective than providing mental health treatment. As a result, many institutions of higher education are treating burnout with wellness instead of mental illness with treatment. This approach to mental health treatment is flawed as college-aged young adults are vulnerable to bigger problems than fatigue; and when unaddressed, these bigger problems can, unfortunately, lead to death.

For the above reasons, MPS asks the committee to give SB 1015 a favorable report so that the issue of mental health care in higher education can be studied in its totality and not simply on its fiscal impact.

If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com.

Respectfully submitted,
The Legislative Action Committee for the Maryland Psychiatric Society.