

Testimony before Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

****Support with Amendment****

SB 896 – Commission on Student Behavioral Health and Mental Health Treatment

March 10, 2020

Maryland’s Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW–MD), which represents professional social workers across the state, supports Senate Bill 896. We are appreciative of your interest in learning more about the mental health needs of the students in our public schools and how to best address them. We strongly support the passage of the bill to establish the Commission on Student Behavioral Health and Mental Health Treatment, so that the guidelines that define behavioral and mental health treatment in our schools reflect best practices and the most recent research.

As School Social Workers, we are the only professionals serving students in schools on a daily basis who are both Certificated by the Maryland State Department of Education as well as universally licensed to provide mental health treatment through Maryland’s Health Occupations Code. There are other MSDE-Certificated mental health professionals in schools, such as school counselors and school psychologists, who bring other valuable skills and expertise like college/career counseling and psychometric testing to support the growth and success of our students. These professions are appropriately reflected in the membership of the proposed Commission, but they are not all licensed to provide mental health treatment.

As social workers, we request an amendment to include a member of the Maryland Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-MD) to serve on this Commission. As experts in mental health treatment, we believe that a clinical social worker who has had experience in schools can offer valuable assistance to the Commission as the members address the charge that they are given through this legislation.

Amendment No. 1

On page 2, after line 15, insert:

(viii) ONE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MARYLAND CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS.

Together, school social workers, school psychologists, and school counselors collaborate to provide a multi-disciplinary approach that supports the unique needs of each child. Thank you for your support of our students and their needs, and the consideration of our request.

Gail L. Martin, LCSW-C
School Social Worker
Chair; Social Work in School Committee
NASW (Maryland Chapter)