



March 10, 2020

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

RE: Support with Amendments – SB 896 Commission on Student Behavioral Health and Mental Health Treatment

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 SB 896: Commission on Student Behavioral Health and Mental Health Treatment (SB 896) as a group focused on studying, evaluating, updating, and revising guidelines for student behavioral health and mental health treatment and practices in general is warranted here in Maryland. MPS asks the Committee to reconsider the composition of the commission as it lacks a physician, and more importantly a psychiatrist.

As you are aware, psychiatrists are physicians first and thus can offer other commission members with invaluable clinical insight as to mental illness as well as the associated symptoms, such as unusual or disturbing thoughts, moods, and/or behaviors. Furthermore, a psychiatrist member to the commission could also provide invaluable insight in to somatic symptoms, symptoms of the body that can manifest themselves as mental illness.

MPS, therefore, asks for the following amendment to SB 896:

On page 2, in line 13 strike “and”; on the same page, in line 15 after “Psychologists” insert “AND”; in the next line insert, “(VIII) ONE PHYSICIAN REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MARYLAND PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY.”

With the amendment adopted, MPS would then ask the committee for a favorable report of SB 896. 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