



February 8, 2023

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
2 West  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB 199 – Primary and Secondary Education – Comprehensive Health  
Education Framework – Established – Letter of Support

Dear Chair Feldman and Vice Chair Kagan:

This letter is in support of SB199, which provides for the development of a comprehensive health education framework through a collaboration between the State Department of Education and the Maryland Department of Health.

The Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling (the Center) is a program of the University of Maryland School of Medicine that promotes healthy and informed choices regarding gambling and problem gambling. Problem gambling is inherently a mental health issue, as it has been classified by the American Psychological Association as an addiction.<sup>i</sup> High school students are especially susceptible to problem gambling, with the National Council on Problem Gambling stating that 4-6% of high schoolers are considered addicted to gambling, which is a rate that is double that of adults.<sup>ii</sup> While mental health issues are common risk factors for problem gambling, they can also be a result of problem gambling as well – emphasized by the fact that adolescents with gambling problems have been found to have significantly higher rates of suicidal ideation and attempts than non-gamblers and social gamblers.<sup>iii</sup>

The comprehensive health education framework that will result from this bill will allow students to learn about the importance of healthy living, including how to properly handle mental health issues and alerting them of the increased risks they may face as a result of these problems. Because there is a strong link between mental and emotional health and problem gambling, the Center supports this bill.

Sincerely,

Mary Drexler, MSW



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<sup>i</sup> <https://dictionary.apa.org/gambling-disorder>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2022/07/12/as-sports-betting-grows-states-tackle-teenage-problem-gambling>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://kmb.camh.ca/ggtu/knowledge-translation/youth>