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February 1, 2023

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Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair
Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building, Room 131
Annapolis, MD 21401

House 119 - Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework –Established

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state, is writing to express **SUPPORT for House Bill 119 - Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework - Established**, which would establish content standards for the health education program received by children in Maryland's public schools.

Health education is an essential part of today's public education system, promoting age-appropriate healthy emotional and behavioral knowledge and habits, which are critical for our children as they grow into adulthood. The areas covered in this bill include such vitally important topics as mental and emotional health, substance abuse prevention, family life and human sexuality, gender identity and sexual orientation, and safety and violence prevention. Appropriate education in these areas may lower the prevalence of mental health disorders, substance abuse, and suicide in our youth, and can help our children stay safe and grow into healthy functioning adults.

We also recognize that some parents may be uncomfortable with some of these topics being covered at school, and hence we agree with the bill's language allowing parents to "opt out" of the coverage of certain topics, replaced by required relevant alternative learning activities.

House Bill 119 will help to ensure that Maryland's students will grow up safe and healthy, both physically and emotionally. We urge a **FAVORABLE REPORT** on this important legislation.

Thank you for considering our comments on HB 119. If we can be of any further assistance as the House – Ways and Means Committee considers this bill, please do not hesitate to contact MPA's Legislative Chair, Dr. Pat Savage at mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Resnik, Psy.D.

Rebecca Resnick, Psy.D.
President

R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.

R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs