

Emily Tarsell, LCPC

**2314 Benson Mill Road
Sparks, Maryland 21152
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Unfavorable HB829

Public Health - Service Sector Employees - Mental Health First Aid Training

Dear Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk and HGO Committee Members,

I am Emily Tarsell, a mother and licensed mental health therapist with many years of clinical experience. I oppose HB829 for a variety of reasons.

I understand the well meaning intent of the bill to help the public be more aware of indications of mental illness so as to prompt certain “trained” individuals to direct the afflicted to resources for care. However, I foresee many problems with the proposed bill.

1. It takes years of higher education and training to be licensed to diagnose severe behavioral health issues. While I understand you are talking about recognition of possible indicators of mental health issues to assist someone to get help, the person making that call could be very misguided.
2. The person making the call could be vulnerable to lawsuits by the person they wanted to help if that intervention was unwanted or misguided.
3. The person making the call could be vulnerable to physical harm.
4. Singling out employees from a few service sectors seems arbitrary and the task is not in their job description. If the task takes them away from the job they are hired to do, who picks up the slack especially if it happens frequently? If it doesn't happen frequently, is the training really worth the investment?
5. The suggested training and advertising could be costly.
6. If the purpose is to increase awareness of certain mental health issues and resources, there are probably better ways to do that. Educational opportunities could be offered to the public at large and lists of resources could be published and posted in public places. That would probably be more cost effective.
7. Implementing a program in which certain service employees would be doing surveillance regarding others has the aura of being a citizen spy. That's the kind of thing that they do in China which we don't want to replicate here. While I understand that the intent of this bill is to help another, one can imagine such a system becoming something unintended.

The bill is too problematic. Please vote **UNFAVORABLE for HB829. Thank you.**

Emily Tarsell, LCPC