

Sophie Nguyen HB612 – Lifesavers Schools Program Written Testimony

HB612 Written Testimony – Ways and Means Committee (2/12 at 1:00 PM)

Public Schools - Lifesaver Schools Program - Establishment

Sophie Nguyen - Rockville High School Student

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Sophie Nguyen, and I am a student from Montgomery County. I write to you on behalf of students in Maryland to request a favorable report on House Bill 612.

In 2021, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, I realized that the pandemic not only contributed toward mental health issues but also amplified problems within our system that were *pre-existing* – ones that were swept under the rug. Seeing the deterioration of mental health among my peers, I testified to the Montgomery County Board of Education in support of increased resources, such as school psychologists and counselors at every school.

Montgomery County took the initiative to ensure that a school psychologist was available at every school. As I saw more mental health education and awareness in my school, I was relieved to know that resources were readily available for all students, in case a mental health crisis would ever occur. But we also have to recognize that these services are not available to *every* Maryland student.

HB612 would be an immense step toward improved mental health and educational equity across the state. From creating a centralized webpage for mental health resources to using therapy dog programs in school, this bill would incentivize schools to bridge the inequities

in our educational system, ensuring that these issues are not just swept under the rug.

A vote for HB612 is a vote for our mental health and safety. Accordingly, I respectfully request a favorable report on HB612 from the committee. Thank you for your time.