

**HB612 – Ways and Means Committee (2/12 at 1:00 PM) *Public Schools -  
Lifesaver Schools Program - Establishment***

American Youth Association, Chesapeake Regional Association of Student Councils, Maryland  
Association of Student Councils

Gabriella Blair - Meade Senior High School Student

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

My name is Gabriella Blair and I am a student from Anne Arundel County. I write to you on behalf of students in Maryland to request a favorable report on House Bill 612.

This issue matters to me personally because I myself have struggled with mental health in the past and thankfully I have been properly educated on this matter so I was able to combat those issues. Other student's in my school may not be as fortunate to know as much about mental health. At my school, yes we have counselors and yes we have adult's student's feel comfortable talking to but I feel as if there isn't enough talk about mental health and the risks it provokes. There have been no class assemblies educating about mental health. There are no morning announcement's asking if students are okay. Considering the fact that there are kids walking through the halls with tears in their eyes from having panic attacks, I believe there should be more open discussions on mental health. Sometimes I wonder, are these children suffering in silence?

Over 1 in 5 White , almost half of Hispanics plus African Americans and % of Asian Teens in Maryland, have been poorly treated in schools due to their race and most of these student's did not speak up. One of the most common reasons teenagers commit suicide and feel unwanted is due to bullying and these student's not seeking help is potentially causing harm to their mental health. Providing more education on what signs of mental health are and certain feelings mental health consists of can be the difference in the number trends we see within teens committing suicide. Please help us to not only make a change in the suicide numbers but also help spread awarness on mental health.

This bill will support my school by allowing students to be properly educated on first aid, mental health and provide more awareness towards mental health to prevent a student from feeling like they cannot speak up if they are suffering from mental health. The Lifesavers Program should be a necessity in public schools due to its constant and consistent supply of mental health resources, its mental health wellness training and its knowledge on first aid to better educate students on mental health as a whole.

Accordingly, I respectfully request a favorable report on HB612 from the committee. Thank you for your time.