

Emily Noonan HB612 – Lifesavers Schools Program Written Testimony Outline

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

PM) *Public Schools - Lifesaver Schools Program - Establishment*

Luisa Depkin - Loch Raven High School Student

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

My name is Luisa Depkin, I am currently a senior at Loch Raven High School from Baltimore County. I write to you on behalf of students in Maryland to request a favorable report on House Bill 612.

During my high school years I have seen the impact of mental health issues first hand. A common thing you'll hear high schoolers saying is "I literally want to kill myself" in almost any instance where things get hard. While a majority of students say it in a dramatic fashion, there are plenty who don't. Why has this become such a normal saying? It's because when mental health became a prominent issue, there was no support, not from schools, not from the community to a point where it has become a joke. After reading this bill and realizing how many resources schools have at their disposal, yet use very few, it is heartbreaking.

With the current budget deficit in Maryland I understand the importance of promoting bills with little to no fiscal note as there is simply no money left. Lucky for you, this bill will do nothing but encourage schools to use the programs that are already offered for them. There would be no additional cost needed for the State to pay.

Nearly one in five high school students reported seriously considering suicide in Maryland and we have a chance to prevent that from happening. A lack of mental health resources and support in a school can oftentimes make children feel alone. They have nowhere to go. Let's give them a place where they can feel comfortable and safe.

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