

My name is Saara Khan and I'm a senior at Towson High School. I am writing in support of HB612, the Lifesavers Schools Program as a student that has gone through the public school system for 13 years. During this time, I've come to understand the severity of the mental health crisis for students in Maryland. Like many others, I've heard the tragic stories of student suicides, but more than that I've witnessed close friends and personally experienced mental health struggles.

Students go to school to learn, but we can't achieve our full potential if we aren't mentally well. Schools are an integral part of supporting students in their mental health journey. It is the duty of administration to support students and utilize mental health resources to the best of their abilities. While a lack of resources is certainly something we can improve on, there are currently so many resources that are simply not being taken advantage of.

This bill will incentivize schools to use these resources by giving them a "Lifesaver School" label and expand mental health support for students. More specifically the implementation of school-wide assemblies, wellness programs, and peer mentoring programs reinforces the schools' commitment to their students. In addition to mental health, Lifesavers also requires implementing training for first aid and encourages the use of therapy dogs. By prioritizing student's well-being alongside their academic success we are more likely to thrive.

School's CAN do more, and this bill has the potential to save lives. I urge a favorable report of HB612, to provide students with the support they deserve.