

Written Testimony for **HB 612: Public Schools - Lifesaver Schools Program - Establishment** - Please **VOTE NO** on this bill.

Dear Ways & Means Committee:

This bill reads "...AT MINIMUM, THE DEPARTMENT'S CRITERIA FOR A LIFESAVER SCHOOL SHALL REQUIRE A PUBLIC SCHOOL TO:

(I) OFFER TO STUDENTS: 1. EVIDENCE-BASED TRAINING ON FIRST AID; 2. A MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS PROGRAM OR A PEER MENTORING PROGRAM; AND 3. A SCHOOLWIDE ASSEMBLY ON MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS AND RESOURCES; (II) PROVIDE SERVICE HOURS TO STUDENTS FOR PARTICIPATING IN HEALTH AND SAFETY ACTIVITIES; (III) 1. OFFER TO SCHOOL PERSONNEL AS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT A MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS PROGRAM OR TRAINING ON FIRST AID; AND 2. AUTHORIZE SCHOOL PERSONNEL TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DURING SCHOOL HOURS, EARN ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION, OR RECEIVE CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS FOR PARTICIPATION; (IV) ESTABLISH ON THE SCHOOL'S WEBSITE AN EASILY ACCESSIBLE WEBPAGE THAT INCLUDES RESOURCES FOR A MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS PROGRAM OR TRAINING ON FIRST AID; AND (V) OFFER TO THE COMMUNITY AN EDUCATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS AND RESOURCES...A LIFESAVER SCHOOL MAY UTILIZE A CERTIFIED THERAPY DOG PROGRAM IN THE SCHOOL...A PUBLIC SCHOOL MAY PARTNER WITH THE COUNTY BOARD TO FULFILL THE DEPARTMENT'S CRITERIA TO QUALIFY AS A LIFESAVER SCHOOL...THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADOPT REGULATIONS TO CARRY OUT THIS SECTION..."

There are two things in this bill that I like. I like schools offering "EVIDENCE-BASED TRAINING ON FIRST AID.." for physical emergencies for any student in our public schools. I also like "A LIFESAVER SCHOOL MAY UTILIZE A CERTIFIED THERAPY DOG PROGRAM IN THE SCHOOL..." Certified therapy dogs have been proven to lower stress for college students during final exams and other times. I agree that certified therapy dogs could be of great benefit to our students, as long as they are utilized in the proper way.

However, the rest of the bill has things that **do not belong in schools**. "...A MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS PROGRAM OR A PEER MENTORING PROGRAM..." How is this "mental health wellness program going to work? Are the schools going to utilize school counselors for this "mental health wellness"? What about outside mental health professionals? How would the school differentiate students that are working with outside mental health professionals to coordinate the same appropriate messages regarding what each considers to be "mental health wellness"? How is the "peer mentoring program" going to work? What qualifications do student peers have to deliver messages to other students about "mental health wellness"?

"...A SCHOOLWIDE ASSEMBLY ON MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS AND RESOURCES..." How is the school going to coordinate with some students' outside mental health professionals to deliver the same messages, so as not to confuse a student and contribute to worsening mental health for those students? How is this going to happen as it relates to a "schoolwide assembly"? Also, what resources are going to be given? How are the schools going to make sure that their resources are the same as any resources given by a student's outside mental health professionals?

"...PROVIDE SERVICE HOURS TO STUDENTS FOR PARTICIPATING IN HEALTH AND SAFETY ACTIVITIES..." I would be ok with providing students with service hours, as long as it would be for a "health and safety activity" such as first aid. It is **not** a good concept to include "Mental Health Wellness" activities within the "health and safety activities" for the reasons I stated above.

It is **not** a good concept to "...OFFER TO SCHOOL PERSONNEL AS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT A MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS PROGRAM...", again for the reasons stated above. I would be ok with offering school personnel "...TRAINING ON FIRST AID..." for physical emergencies. I think that would be a fantastic idea.

It is **not** a good concept to "...ESTABLISH ON THE SCHOOL'S WEBSITE AN EASILY ACCESSIBLE WEBPAGE THAT INCLUDES **RESOURCES** FOR A MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS PROGRAM...", again for the same reasons stated above regarding coordination with a student's outside mental health professionals . It would be fine to establish on the school's website an easily accessible web page that includes resources for "...TRAINING ON FIRST AID..." for physical emergencies of any student or staff.

It is **not** a good concept to "... OFFER TO THE COMMUNITY AN EDUCATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS AND RESOURCES...", again for the same reasons stated above. There are other agencies that offer mental health wellness courses, symposiums, etc. that would do a much better job with delivering this information than our public school system. Our public schools were established to teach our children academic subjects that will teach them how to be productive members of society in whatever career, job or vocation they choose. Our public school system is not the proper entity for having "educational assemblies on "**mental health wellness...**"

"...A PUBLIC SCHOOL MAY PARTNER WITH THE COUNTY BOARD TO FULFILL THE DEPARTMENT'S CRITERIA TO QUALIFY AS A LIFESAVER SCHOOL..."

How exactly would this work? Every county's Board of Education members come from different backgrounds and have different knowledge and skill sets. How would schools "partner" with them to "fulfill the Department's criteria to qualify as a "Lifesaver School"?

I understand the intention of this bill. There are just too many questions, unknowns and problems with our public schools being the entity to bring this information to our students and to the public or community! How would this work into a county's public school budget, for instance? Everyone is saying that our schools are already struggling financially to do the most basic of things and that teachers have to use their own money for things like school supplies, etc. for their classrooms. Where is the justification for demanding more from our school systems than they can possibly, reasonably give?

For these reasons, I would request that all of you **VOTE NO** on this bill.

Thank you for your courtesy, attention and cooperation.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals

A Very Concerned Mother of 3 and Maryland Resident