

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2023 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 573  
Appropriations

(Delegate Boafo, *et al.*)

Education, Energy, and the Environment

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Maryland Higher Education Commission - Access to Mental Health Advisory  
Committee - Establishment

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This bill establishes the Access to Mental Health Advisory Committee within the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC). Staff for the committee must be provided on a rotating basis by the institutions of higher education that have members on the committee. By December 1, 2023, the committee must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and specified committees of the General Assembly. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2023.**

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Public four-year institutions of higher education and Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) higher education expenditures may increase minimally to staff the committee; costs may be higher for the institution initially assigned to staff the committee due to the reporting requirement. Staffing costs rotate among institutions that have members on the committee. It is unclear if BCCC is included in the rotation, as explained below. Any expense reimbursements for members of the committee are assumed to be minimal and absorbable with existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

**Local Effect:** Local community college expenditures may increase minimally to staff the committee; costs may be higher for the institution initially assigned to staff the committee due to the reporting requirement. Staffing costs rotate among institutions that have members on the committee. It is unclear if local community colleges are included in the rotation, as explained below. Any expense reimbursements for members of the committee are assumed to be minimal and absorbable with existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## Analysis

**Bill Summary:** The committee must:

- study the policies and procedures adopted by institutions of higher education in the State regarding access to mental health care and the prevention and treatment of mental illness in students;
- examine the challenges for institutions of higher education in meeting the demand for mental health services;
- review best practices for accessing off-campus mental health services;
- review best practices for, and barriers to, the implementation of counseling services, including crisis, personal, mental health, sexual violence, and substance abuse counseling;
- review and identify the best models for providing mental health services, including stand-alone centers, centers with integrated student health services, comprehensive services, case management, and crisis resources;
- identify concerns in rural areas and workforce shortage areas; and
- study and make recommendations regarding any other matters the committee considers appropriate.

Further, the committee must make recommendations regarding:

- ways to reduce costs and barriers to providing access to mental health services on campus;
- the use of telemedicine and video conferencing in the provision of mental health services;
- the use of hotlines and other means to disseminate information to students related to mental health services on and off campus, including information concerning availability and fees; and
- the implementation of general mental health counseling services and specialized counseling services.

The bill establishes the membership of the committee. The committee must elect a chair from among its members. The committee may elect other officers as determined by the committee. The committee must meet six times per year.

A member of the committee may not receive compensation as a member of the committee but is entitled to reimbursement for expenses.

**State/Local Expenditures:** Public institutions of higher education that have members on the committee must staff the committee on a rotating basis; thus, higher education expenditures for the relevant institutions of higher education may increase minimally. Any such costs cannot be reliably estimated, partially because it is unknown which institutions will have members on the committee. Staffing costs in fiscal 2024 are higher and potentially not absorbable due to the reporting requirement and the likely need to concentrate several meetings within a few months. The duration or the frequency of the rotation is not specified in the bill. The Executive Director of the Maryland Association of Community Colleges, or the executive's designee must serve on the committee. Even with additional opportunities for community college representation (two behavioral health counselors from a community college must be appointed and one student member may be a community college student), it is unclear if BCCC and local community colleges are included as institutions that may be in the rotation.

Any expense reimbursements for committee members are assumed to be minimal and generally absorbable within existing budgeted resources, presumably by the institution providing staff support. Institutions can provide any requested information using existing resources.

This estimate does not reflect any policy changes made by institutions of higher education in response to the findings and recommendations of the committee. MHEC advises it does not have staff to address any non-academic or non-financial aid services provided at Maryland's colleges and universities such as mental health; thus, for MHEC to coordinate any statewide effort to support students in accessing mental health resources and supporting institutions in this work, additional MHEC staff are required.

**Additional Comments:** To the extent private nonprofit institutions are considered to have a member on the committee due to the President of the Maryland Independent College and University Association or the president's designee being a member of the committee, private nonprofit institution higher education expenditures may increase minimally.

The committee must meet in perpetuity at least six times per year; however, the bill has only one reporting requirement – within five months of the bill taking effect.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See SB 937 and HB 1029 of 2022.

**Designated Cross File:** SB 263 (Senator Jackson, *et al.*) - Education, Energy, and the Environment.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Higher Education Commission; University System of Maryland; Morgan State University; Maryland Independent College and University Association; Department of Legislative Services

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