

SB611(HB782)- Allowing children to consent to mental health treatment without parental consent

To Whom It May Concern

Good afternoon, my name is Kristyn Gerchalk and I am a mother of 6 living in Pikesville, Maryland. I am writing to **oppose this bill**, and for a variety of reasons. I believe you should too. How can children consent to their own mental health treatment without parental oversight if children cannot fully grasp their own mental health, let alone the concept of mental health and mental illness? Children are not developmentally advanced enough to be able to make these decisions and rely upon their parents to guide and teach them until they are.

This bill is an effort to strip control from loving parents and place that control into entities who do NOT have the best interests of the children at heart. How could they? My children are not theirs. They have no knowledge of my children's unique medical histories to be able to prescribe a medication on a whim. How will the entity granted power to diagnose and treat my children be able to guarantee there will be no negative interactions or side effects? They cannot. How they ensure they are not letting racial bias enter into the picture and thus over diagnosing and medicating young black children like mine?

In my experience, these types of bills negatively affect black people more so than our white and more privileged counterparts. And this is in spite of socioeconomic status. Racism affects all black people equally and I can see those granted rights over my child exploiting the power this bill provides them and ultimately harming my children. I cannot sit idly by and abide that. Not when many medications prescribed for depression are linked to an increased risk of suicidal ideation and suicide when not prescribed properly or taken consistently. And how can I properly monitor compliance if I have no awareness of the diagnosis or medication?

You cannot cut the parent out of the process and claim child welfare as the reason. Parents are their child's first and best advocate for their health and wellness. There is no need to further eat away at parental rights by passing this bill which I guarantee will cause more problems than it will solve.

Thank you.
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