



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 6, 2020

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 1443—Commission on Student Behavioral Health

Children must be ready to learn in order to thrive. When our children are struggling, we want to make sure that they all have access to quality behavioral health care. This bill aims to ensure that all of Maryland's children, regardless of their zip code, are met with the same standard of behavioral health care at in school.

HB 1443 establishes a commission that would be tasked with studying, making recommendations for, and revising guidelines for practices relating to behavioral health in a public education setting to ensure that every school has clear, equitable policies in place.

It would further review strategies to coordinate behavioral health practices in an educational setting with the broad range of providers currently operating within the school system so that all behavioral health practices in an educational setting are operating with the same expectations and standard of care.

The Maryland Department of Education (MSDE) does not have universal licensing guidelines for behavioral health care providers that operate in schools; they are certified under the Education Statute but are not required to be licensed under the Health Occupations Statute. As such, MSDE's guidance for behavioral health services does not offer clarity, as it speaks in limited language drafted not by health providers but by educators.

The intent of the commission is to bring the expertise of health providers and educators together to create universal guidelines and clarify expectations for all behavioral health practices in an educational setting.

As we work to implement the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission, it is vital that we ensure the access to behavioral health care in all Maryland schools is equitable.

Thank you and I ask for a favorable report on HB 1443.