

House Bill 466 Higher Education – Student Identification Cards – Required Information

Appropriations Committee

February 17, 2021

Position: SUPPORT

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health, mental illness and substance use. We appreciate this opportunity to present testimony in support of House Bill 466.

HB 466 requires higher education institutions that provide student identification cards to include the telephone number of Maryland's Helpline. It can also include the telephone numbers for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, the Crisis Text Line, or an on-campus crisis center.

As of 2018, suicide was the second leading cause of death among individuals ages 10-34 and the fourth leading cause of death among individuals ages 35-54 in the United States. That year suicide claimed the lives of 48,000 people.¹ Death by suicide has been on the rise in Maryland over the last two decades, and most recently increased from 581 deaths in 2016 to 630 deaths in 2017, and again to 650 in 2018.^{1,2} In 2018, it was the third leading cause of death for individuals ages 10-34 in Maryland.²

Students in higher education are under increased stress. In a survey provided to nearly 68,000 students in 2019, over the previous 12 months, 50.7% reported feeling overwhelming anxiety, 60.7% felt "very sad," 37.1% felt so depressed that it was difficult to function, and 47.9% felt things were hopeless. Further data showed 11.6% seriously considered suicide, 1.8% attempted suicide, and 5.6% reported self-injurious behaviors.³ Our students are struggling and have been for many years. This bill provides students with quick and easy access to help during a crisis and can help reduce deaths by suicide.

Maryland law already requires that Maryland Crisis Connect be printed in student handbooks and on student ID cards for grades six through twelve. It is time to expand similar requirements to higher education. For these reasons, MHAMD supports HB 466 and urges a favorable report.

¹National Institute of Mental Health. (2021, January). *Suicide*. Retrieved from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/suicide.shtml>

²American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. (n.d.). *Suicide facts & figures: Maryland 2020*. Retrieved from <https://aws-fetch.s3.amazonaws.com/state-fact-sheets/2020/2020-state-fact-sheets-maryland.pdf>

³American College Health Association. (2019). *National College Health Assessment Spring 2019 reference group executive summary*. Retrieved from https://www.acha.org/documents/ncha/NCHA-II_SPRING_2019_US_REFERENCE_GROUP_EXECUTIVE_SUMMARY.pdf

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