

February 15, 2021

House Bill 466 - Higher Education - Student Identification Cards - Required Information- SUPPORT

Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the House Appropriations Committee,

The National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a statewide network of more than 45,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations and service providers. NAMI Maryland is dedicated to providing education, support and advocacy for persons with mental illnesses, their families and the wider community.

NAMI Maryland supports **HB 466**, legislation that would require Maryland colleges and universities to include helpline information on student identification cards.

On average, mental illness impacts about one in five adults and one in six adolescents, and despite these staggering numbers, only about half of those individuals seek help in a given year. In a higher education setting, mental illness can lead to social isolation, slipping grades and is a leading driver of failure to complete a degree. Students with untreated mental health and behavioral health conditions need an approach that starts with access to high-quality mental health services but does not stop there.

A little bit of education, like the helpline number required in the bill can go a long way towards preventing a crisis from ending in tragedy. Adolescence and young adulthood are the time when many mental illnesses present. Half of all mental health conditions develop by age 14, and 75% by age 24, and tragically, suicide is the second-leading cause of death for people aged 10–34 years old.

In 2018, an [American College Health Association report](#) found that over 40 percent of college students said they felt so depressed they had difficulty functioning. And in 2020, that same group found that “60% of students indicate that the pandemic has made it more difficult to access mental health care.” [Current estimates](#) suggest that there is one mental health clinician for every 1,000-2,000 students on smaller campuses, and one clinician for every 2,000-3,500 students on larger campuses.

The past year has been especially challenging for the student population and mental health and we know access continues to be an issue. NAMI Maryland urges our higher educational institutions to take actions required in the bill and to go further, by ensuring there are accessible and affordable mental health supports on campus and available via telehealth.

This is an at-risk population who may benefit from a relatively small change. For these reasons, NAMI Maryland asks for a favorable report on **HB 244**.

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