

Support with Amendments**House Appropriations Committee*****House Bill 466 (Palakovich Carr) Higher education – Student Identification Cards – Required Information*****Sara C. Fidler, President, sfidler@micua.org****February 17, 2021**

On behalf of the private nonprofit member institutions of the Maryland Independent College and University Association (MICUA) and the 66,000 students that we serve, we appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony in **support with amendments** to **House Bill 466 (Palakovich Carr) Higher Education – Student Identification Cards – Required Information**. This bill requires institutions of higher education to provide the telephone number for Maryland's Helpline (2-1-1) on all student identification cards at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. While we understand the sponsor's interest in having a simple universal number for this purpose, and we respect and admire the sponsor's commitment to assisting our students in this manner, we write to advise you of several complicating and mitigating factors that may undermine the effectiveness of the intent of the bill.

Relevance of the Maryland Helpline

The Maryland Helpline may not be the resource that would be immediately or most helpful to one of our students who is in crisis. The response and services that would be most beneficial and relevant to a student living in College Park may not be the same as the response and services that would be most beneficial and relevant to a student living in Emmitsburg or Chestertown, for example. A student may also be more comfortable contacting a campus-based personal contact who has provided assistance in the past than an impersonal centralized call center. Further, a telephone number may not be the best technology for the age demographic of students at our institutions. Finally, we note that students who are home *in another state* on a holiday break or during the summer may not be well-served by the *Maryland Helpline*. We want to be sure to direct our students in crisis to the resources and services that will best serve their needs, and in a manner that will be most effective.

Access to the Student ID Card

If the premise of the bill is to ensure that students have access to crisis resources and services 24/7, 365 days per year, we note that students do not carry their id cards with them at all times, particularly when away from campus. Further, technology is evolving in such a way that several of our institutions will be replacing the traditional student id card with a mobile app in the near future.

Duplication of Existing Resources on Campus

Our institutions are deeply concerned about the mental health and ability of our students to access resources and services during a crisis. To that end, we provide information during orientation and in the student handbook, we post magnets in residence halls, we affix posters around campus, and we indicate these resources and services in other social media and marketing materials. This campaign is robust and tailored to the needs of our particular student population.

MICUA schools offer a myriad of campus resources and crisis intervention services to our students, such as:

- Counseling centers that are open from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm during the week;
- Phone triage support outside of student health center hours (one school is contracted with a local hospital);
- Referral to the local crisis hotline (and/or home county's crisis helpline);
- A 24/7 mental health support line;
- Trained residential/student life and student development staff to deescalate a crisis; and
- Trained campus police to collaborate with on-call student life or counseling center staff.

Proposed Compromise

We recognize that this bill is a timely response to a unique mental health crisis created by the ongoing pandemic. However, we do not believe that *requiring* our institutions to provide the telephone number for Maryland's Helpline on an id card is the best way to address this issue. Instead, we suggest an amendment that would *authorize* us to provide this information if we determine that this telephone number is the best use of the limited space on a student's id card and an effective manner in which to reach our students. The amendment would be as follows:

On page 2, in line 1, strike "SHALL" and substitute "MAY".

We thank the sponsor for her willingness to work with us on this issue. We truly want to protect our students from harm and keep our campus communities safe. We look forward to being part of the conversation to accomplish this goal.

For all of these reasons, MICUA urges a Favorable with Amendments Report on House Bill 466.