



The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

The Mdcswc, sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,500 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland.

TO: The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Members, Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
The Honorable Alonzo T. Washington

FROM: Judith Gallant, LCSW-C, Chair, Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

DATE: March 30, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 461 – *Public Schools – Student Attendance – Excused Absences for Mental Health Needs*

The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition (Mdcswc), sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,500 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland. On behalf of Mdcswc, we **support** House Bill 461.

House Bill 461, as amended by the House, provides that absences from school for mental health needs are lawful absences, prohibits the requirement of a physician's written excuse for those absences, requires the permission of a parent or guardian, and specifies that a student meet with a school mental health professional upon return. The increase in the incidences of mental health issues in children, particularly adolescents, is well-documented. Addressing these needs requires a broad range of services but also must recognize that even if not severe, a mental health issue in a child may make school attendance challenging and not in the child's best interest on a given day. House Bill 461 provides some flexibility in attendance policy to recognize the need for time off without a requirement to document that need by a physician. It is a small change in policy with the potential to help those students experiencing mental health issues, as well as their parents or guardians, relieve one point of stress. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

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