

A LIFE BRIDGE HEALTH GROUP

# CENTER FOR HOPE

Advancing hope, healing and resilience



SB 278/HB 34 – State Department of Education and Maryland Department of Health – Maryland School-based Health Center Standards – Telehealth

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee– January 20, 2021

Testimony of Joyce Lombardi, Director of Government Relations and Legal Services, Center for Hope

Position: **SUPPORT**

---

I write in support of SBB278. The Center for Hope, a subsidiary of Life Bridge, is a comprehensive violence program that addresses violence through the lifespan, and includes child advocacy, domestic violence programs, street violence interruption programs and an elder abuse program

This emergency bill would make it easier for public schools to provide tele-health and tele-mental health to our students by eliminating an unnecessary and burdensome review process from MDSE.

**In the Pandemic, We Need More Eyes on Kids.** The sudden reduction in child abuse claims received by the Maryland Department of Human Services is unprecedented. Between April and July 2020, child maltreatment reports declined by 46.8% compared to the same period in 2019. Why? Because mandated reporters such as school personnel and health workers account for the lion's share of all child abuse reports in Maryland, and the USA.

What's worse, the cases are more severe. For example, between March and April, 2020, over 86 percent of cases referred to Children's National Hospital due to child abuse concerns required hospitalization, compared to 50 percent during the same period last year. Ten percent of those hospitalized died as a result of their abuse, more than triple the death rates this time last year. *Source: 2021 Legislative Session Issue Brief, Dept of Legislative Services p. 220*

**Telehealth Includes Mental Health.** The stress and anxiety levels of children and adolescents are soaring during the pandemic, as kids are cut off from routine, structure, exercise and friends. Demand for the mental tele-health services we provide at the Baltimore Child Abuse Center (as subsidiary of LifeBridge Health) is very high and is often one of the only emotional outlets children have anywhere. This bill would reportedly also facilitate mental health telehealth services.

For all of the heretofore stated reasons, we request a **FAVORABLE** report for SB278.

Joyce Lombardi, Esq., Director of Government Relations and Legal Services (443) 923-7005, [jlombard@lifebridgehealth.org](mailto:jlombard@lifebridgehealth.org)