

**BILL:**               **HB0461 - Public Schools - Student Attendance - Excused Absences for Mental Health Needs**

**SPONSOR:**       **Delegate Alonzo T. Washington**

**POSITION:**       **FAVORABLE**

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Friday, March 26, 2021

### **HB 0461**

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, we are writing in favor of HB0461- Excused Absences for Mental Health Needs.

The Maryland Student Coalition finds it a necessity for students to be allowed inconsequential days off to treat their mental health. For the 180 day school year that is filled with tests, pressures, and other external forces, it should be expected that for minors, additional days off will be needed. In our respective jurisdictions, the school systems have been more than accommodating in allowing students to take a day off for their mental health. They find this as a proactive measure to help student welfare. In some cases, teachers will encourage students to take a day off from school to study or catch up, especially in the most gruesome of weeks. Additionally, adults find the expectation of giving students arguably less flexible workweeks as typical adults unconscionable.

Members of this coalition echo the same concern and recognize the importance of self-care. All of us have experienced tough days and challenging weeks in the education system. The antidote to cure the stress and anxiety that arise during these periods is just a simple break. With the educational setting being a student's fundamental place in society, it should serve a main purpose of treating students with virtue. It does a disservice to student productivity and self-esteem to penalize them for a day off approved by their parent(s)/guardian(s).

For the reasons stated above, we urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB0461.