

OPPOSE SB 0041 Health – Mental and Emotional Disorders – Consent (Mental Health Access Initiative)

While we appreciate the intention of the bill and believe it to be good, we do not believe that it accomplishes the goal of actually improving access to mental health for a 12-year-old/ minor child.

The bill simply cuts the parent out of the equation.

Practical problems with the bill include:

- Who pays the bill when a 12-year-old accesses consultation, diagnosis, and treatment, without their parent or guardian?
- Where is a 12-year-old receiving services without a guardian to take them? How do they get there? Is the intention to make these school-based services? That is not a good direction to go, as we have just witnessed schools shut down for at least a year.
- A mental health diagnosis can follow a child for their entire life. Parent supervision is needed. Research shows that African American boys are more likely to receive diagnoses than their white peers.
- What standardized tool will all practitioners use to assess which children are capable of “giving informed consent?”
- A 12-year-old cannot distinguish between a good practitioner and a poor one. Recent events, like the story of Larry Nassar, a trusted elite gymnastics team doctor, who was a serial abuser, highlight the potential for a child to be harmed by another adult when parents are not involved.

For these reasons we ask you to oppose SB41.

Love Maryland PAC

Silver Spring, MD