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2021 SESSION
Written Testimony

BILL NO: HB 209
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations
POSITION: Letter of Support
TITLE: Public Health- Maryland Suicide Fatality Review Committee

BILL ANALYSIS:

HB 209 authorizes the creation of Maryland Suicide Fatality Review Committee which is imperative to better understand deaths from suicide. This understanding will allow for targeted interventions and policy changes to prevent future suicide deaths.

POSITION RATIONALE:

The Anne Arundel County Department of Health supports HB 209. The Maryland's Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention declared suicide as a serious public health issue. According to the Maryland Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention 2018 State Plan, 581 Marylander's died from suicide by suicide in 2016, an increase of 6.8% from 2015. Anne Arundel County, experienced 79 deaths from suicide in 2018, according to the Department of Health Report Card, 2020. There were many more who attempted suicide, a preventable cause of death.

The Maryland Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention 2018 State Plan recommended establishing a Suicide Fatality Review Committee. The intent of this a Suicide Fatality Review Committee was to address the following goal: increase the timeliness and usefulness of surveillance systems relevant to suicide prevention and improve the ability to collect, analyze, and use this information for action. Maryland has a long history of successfully implementing fatality review committees at the State and local level which have driven action and policy changes to prevent future deaths. The following fatality review teams currently exist in Maryland:

- Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Program (FIMR) (established 1997)
- Maryland Child Fatality Review Team (CFR) (established 1999)
- Overdose Fatality Review Committee (law passed in 2014)

Maryland CFR is required to publish a State report annually and share findings which is an important requirement of HB 209. FIMR, CFR, and the Overdose Fatality Review Committees are driven at the local level as well, and they can also drive change based on findings at the community level. According to the 2020 Maryland Child Fatality Review Report, 26 children or 12.5% of all child deaths in 2017 were from suicide. While CFR examines preventable suicide deaths in children the need is just as great for adults.

While there are many interventions for suicide prevention, we believe a Suicide Fatality Review Committee will be an integral part of better understanding suicide deaths and implementing action and policy changes. We also recommend the State Fatality Review Committee eventually evolve into local committees to establish a better understanding of suicide risks in smaller communities.

Sources:

- <https://aahealth.org/pdf/aahealthreportcard2020.pdf>
- https://bha.health.maryland.gov/OVERDOSE_PREVENTION/Pages/OFR-.aspx
- <https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/mch/Pages/cfr-home.aspx>
- [https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/documents/Health-General-Article-5-704\(b\)\(12\)-Maryland-State-Child-Fatality-Review-Team-2018-Annual-Legislative-Report.pdf](https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/documents/Health-General-Article-5-704(b)(12)-Maryland-State-Child-Fatality-Review-Team-2018-Annual-Legislative-Report.pdf)
- https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/mch/Pages/fimr_home.aspx
- <https://health.maryland.gov/suicideprevention/Documents/2018%20State%20Plan%20on%20Suicide%20Prevention.pdf>