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Budget and Taxation Committee

Health and Human Services
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Joint Committees
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Audit

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Fair Practices and
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Testimony for Senate Bill 168
Public Health - Maryland Suicide Fatality Review Committee
Health and Government Operations
March 23, 2021

Madam Chair Pendergrass and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 168: Public Health - Maryland Suicide Fatality Review Committee. Senate Bill 168 is a cross-file of House Bill 209 and is a response to the mental health and suicide crisis in our state, both of which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

We have already identified suicide as a serious problem in our State. In 2009, the Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention was established. The Commission's preamble identifies suicide as the 11th leading cause of death in Maryland. Senate Bill 168 is an extension of the Commission's efforts to prevent suicide deaths.

Senate Bill 168 establishes the Maryland Suicide Fatality Review Committee to examine the factors contributing to suicide deaths. The Committee will study trends, risk factors, best practices, lapses in response, and barriers to safety. The team must meet quarterly and make recommendations on policy or law changes to both the Governor and the General Assembly. Studies and findings will be disseminated to policymakers, health care providers, health care facilities, and the public.

As we continue through the COVID Pandemic, it is important we address the impacts to those most at risk, including those with mental health issues. Senate Bill 168 is an essential step in suicide prevention, as data and information are necessary to craft preventative interventions. Thank you for your consideration and I respectfully ask for a favorable report of Senate Bill 168.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Addie C. Eckardt".

Senator Addie C. Eckardt