



January 20, 2021

The Honorable Paul E. Pinsky  
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
Room 2 West, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – SB 161: Task Force to Study Access to Mental Health Care in Higher Education

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strives through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS and WPS support Senate Bill 161: Task Force to Study Access to Mental Health Care in Higher Education (SB 161). Two and four-year institutions of higher education traditionally evaluate university-based mental health care through the prism of what it costs the institution. Through that lens, providing wellness care is much more cost-effective than providing mental health treatment. As a result, many institutions of higher education are treating burnout with wellness instead of mental illness with treatment. This approach to mental health treatment is flawed as college-aged young adults are vulnerable to bigger problems than fatigue; and when unaddressed, these bigger problems can, unfortunately, lead to death.

For the above reasons, MPS and WPS ask the committee to give SB 161 a favorable report so that the issue of mental health care in higher education can be studied in its totality and not simply on its fiscal impact.

If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at [tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com](mailto:tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com).

Respectfully submitted,  
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society  
Legislative Action Committee