

Members of the House's Appropriations Committee,

My name is Farah Helal and I'm the Co-Director of Government Relations on the University System of Maryland Student Council along with Kyle Dineen. I am writing on the behalf of the Student Council to express our support of HB1029 titled Maryland Higher Education Commission-Access to Mental Health Advisory Committee- Establishment.

During Council meetings throughout this academic year, each campus has expressed great levels of concern regarding the mental health services provided on their respective campuses. Time and again, representatives explain how there is a shortage in counselors, unbelievably long waiting periods for appointments (sometimes over an academic semester), and for years a lack of sufficient mental health services. As an undergraduate at the University of Maryland-Baltimore County, I have witnessed these issues firsthand.

A MHEC advisory committee dedicated to mental health access within Maryland higher education would bring the shortages in mental health services on our campuses to light and allow the University System of Maryland to better understand and therefore address these gaps. I wholeheartedly support this bill because I recognize the importance of mental health access on college campuses, especially in the midst of COVID and the other social issues weighing on students today.

Sincerely,
Farah Helal