



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

TESTIMONY

Submitted by Dr. Brad Phillips, Executive Director

March 15, 2022

HB 1029 – Maryland Higher Education Commission – Access to Mental Health Advisory Committee - Establishment

POSITION: Favorable

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland's 16 public two-year institutions of postsecondary education supports this legislation and thanks Delegate Valentino-Smith for her sponsorship.

The COVID pandemic that shuttered the nation's colleges and universities has had a particular impact on the mental health of our students. Studies chronicled by the Hunt Institute and the Maryland Chronicle of Higher Education are showing that isolation has increased depression, anxiety disorders, drug use and suicides at alarming rates. Poor mental health hinders a student's academic success and leads to high dropout rates. Since March of 2021, nearly a million students have either dropped or stopped out of pursuing their academic credentials. Community colleges who represent a very vulnerable segment of postsecondary students are particularly concerned with getting these students back on track.

In addition to providing a forum to identify barriers, share policies and procedures and institute best practices for students in need of mental health assistance, enactment of this legislation will assist in identifying workforce shortages in mental health fields of study.

MACC asks the Committee to give HB 1029 a favorable report.