

Testimony before the Senate Health, Education, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
House Bill 657: Public Schools - Standardized Behavioral Health Questionnaire for Students –  
Development and Implementation

**\*\*SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT\*\***  
April 4, 2022

NASW is the largest national organization of the profession, representing over 120,000 social workers nationwide, with 16,000 licensed in the state of Maryland. Over 500 social workers are currently employed in public schools in our state, assisting students and families so that children can learn, grow, and thrive. As licensed mental health professionals, school social workers are meeting every day with students whose anxiety, depression, or other emotional challenges interfere with their ability to profit from the instruction that their teachers provide. Identification and early intervention can be critical in the success of these students.

In February 2022, the Hopeful Futures Campaign published *America's School Mental Health Report Card*, which ranked states on a scale of 1 to 3 across eight policy indicators that support school mental health. While Maryland scored a perfect 3 in the area of “Family-School-Community Partnerships,” respectable 2’s in the areas of “Teacher and Staff Training” and “Health School Climate,” it scored zero in the area of Well Being Checks. It is time for Maryland to demonstrate its leadership by developing a formal screening system for all of its students in this important area.

We would suggest that this legislation be limited to a directive to the Maryland Consortium for Coordinated Community Supports to study, develop and update guidelines for an evidence-based standardized mental health questionnaire to be used in Maryland schools. The educational and school mental health professionals of the Consortium represent the most appropriate disciplines to explore and make recommendations for the most effective tool to achieve this end. We would request that the establishment of an additional panel of non-mental health professionals and the requirement for consultation with them would provide an unnecessary step which may slow down this important work and suggest that this step be eliminated.

With the changes here outlined, we would ask for a favorable report.

Respectfully,

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Executive Director, NASW-MD