

Bay Area Counseling & Consultation, LLC.

Where Mental Health Meets Happiness

Senate Bill 94 – Maryland Suicide Fatality Review Committee
January 18, 2022
Position: SUPPORT

Bay Area Counseling & Consultation, LLC. is an outpatient mental health group practice that specializes in trauma informed psychotherapy services. Courtney Jones, LCSW-C, CCTP is the owner of the agency and has been in the mental health field for over 10 years specializing in treating individuals with a dual-diagnosis and trauma. At this time, we would like to express the gratitude and appreciation for the opportunity to present testimony in support of Senate Bill 94.

Over the last decade, there has been a rise in addiction rates and suicide rates¹ but the mental health field has seen an unprecedented flare up of mental health symptomology and suicidal ideation (to include: suicidal threats, suicide attempts, and recovery from attempts at suicide) throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Most recently, in a report dated November 2021¹ the U.S. Surgeon General, Vivek Murthy, has been called into action and has issued an advisory, “calling for swift action to respond to the growing mental health crisis among youth that has worsened due to the stressors related to the COVID-19 pandemic.”

In the last year, the influx of patients we are seeing at the agency has been drastically impacted by suicidal ideation. Through my 10 years as frontline mental health clinician, I have seen an alarming increase in patients seeking services for assistance and support concerning suicidal ideation, parents seeking services for their children and adolescents who are reporting, “not wanting to live anymore” and most devastatingly, youth processing the loss of classmates who have committed suicide.

Senate Bill 94 establishes a Suicide Fatality Review Committee to identify and address factors contributing to suicide deaths in the state and facilitate system changes to prevent suicide deaths. Mental health practitioners and experts have been overwhelmed by the mental health crisis we are currently experiencing and Senate Bill 94 will offer the support and surveillance that is desperately needed during these unparalleled times.

In my experience, I can tell you, without a shadow of doubt, that suicide is preventable. With proper treatment, education, advocacy, and support people can recover from suicidal ideation and having proper legislation in place to assist with developing strategies aimed at prevention is what Senate Bill 94 seeks to accomplish.

Given the severity of the situation, it is necessary to bring together key stakeholders to allow for confidential identification, investigation, and dissemination of information to reduce suicide. For these reasons, Bay Area Counseling & Consultation, LLC. supports SB 94 and urges a favorable report.

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1. <https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2021-12-07/surgeon-general-issues-advisory-on-youth-mental-health>