



The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

The MdCSWC, sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,500 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland.

TO: The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair
Members, House Ways and Means Committee
The Honorable Alonzo T. Washington

FROM: Judith Gallant, LCSW-C, Chair, Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

DATE: January 20, 2022

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 118 – *Public Schools – Student Attendance – Excused Absences for Mental Health Needs*

The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition (MdCSWC), sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,500 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland. On behalf of MdCSWC, we **support** House Bill 118.

House Bill 118 provides that absences from school for mental health needs are lawful absences, prohibits the requirement of a physician's written excuse for those absences, requires the permission of a parent or guardian, and specifies that a student meet with a school mental health professional upon return. The increase in the incidences of mental health issues in children, particularly adolescents, is well-documented. Addressing these needs requires a broad range of services but also must recognize that even if not severe, a mental health issue in a child may make school attendance challenging and not in the child's best interest on a given day. House Bill 118 provides some flexibility in attendance policy to recognize the need for time off without a requirement to document that need by a physician. It is a small change in policy with the potential to help those students experiencing mental health issues, as well as their parents or guardians, relieve one point of stress. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

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