

My name is Nathan Blanken and I am a Junior Computer Science major at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am the current President of Active Minds at Maryland. The Active Minds chapter at UMD is one of over 600 plus chapters around the country. At a national level, Active Minds is an organization focused on changing the culture behind mental health. We have a variety of programs and tools to help educate students in order to get rid of the stigma around mental health. Active Minds has been around since late 2003 and has since reached tens of thousands of students all across the country. For campuses with Active Minds chapters, Active Minds is just one of the few resources able to support students. During a time when so many of us are struggling whether it be because of isolation, online classes, or a fear of becoming sick, students need more resources and it is more important now, than ever.

A campaign was run on our campus back in February 2018, two full years before the pandemic truly started impacting our daily lives, called "30 days too late". The campaign was run in an effort to get increased accessibility to mental health resources on campus. The title "30 days too late" signifies the amount of time it took to get an appointment from the counseling center after making an initial call. I don't know about anyone else, but if I had to wait 30 days to see a doctor if I have a broken arm, a fever, or just need a check-up, I would not be able to wait that long. With the pandemic, the counseling center is even more backed up now and needs more support than ever before. It's for these reasons that I am in support of bill HB573.