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February 28, 2023
House Bill 573 Testimony
Maryland Higher Education Commission

TESTIMONY OF DR. EMILY DOW, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS OF THE MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION, BEFORE THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE ON FEBRUARY 28, 2023, REGARDING HOUSE BILL 573, MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION – ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE - ESTABLISHMENT

Good afternoon Chairman Barnes, Vice-Chair Chang and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to speak in support of House Bill 573 and offer four suggested amendments.

I am Dr. Emily Dow, Assistant Secretary of Academic Affairs for the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC).

House Bill 573 would establish the Access to Mental Health Advisory Committee within the Maryland Higher Education Commission. It would require the Committee to submit an annual report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the Senate Budget & Taxation and Education, Energy, and Environment Committees and the House Appropriations and Ways & Means Committees beginning on December 1, 2023.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission would suggest the following amendments be made to House Bill 573:

1. Alter the composition to include non-campus based professionals, for example representatives from the Mental Health Association of Maryland or the American College Health Association (a few examples and not an exhaustive list of possibilities);
2. Alter the composition to include a member of the MHEC Student Advisory Council, the Student Commissioner, or a currently enrolled student at a Maryland college or university;
3. Alter the composition to include a non-mental health campus-based professional (e.g., faculty, academic advisor, etc.); and
4. Change the reporting requirement to every 2 years.

The MHEC Student Advisory Council and Faculty Advisory Council have recently discussed the importance of access to mental health resources. The proposed Mental Health Advisory Committee would create a formal context to discuss relevant issues and proposed recommendations to the Commission.

For these reasons, the Maryland Higher Education Commission requests the committee return a FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS report on House Bill 573.