

**Committees:** Appropriations

**Testimony on:** HB573

**Position:** Favorable

24 February 2023

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and the members of the Appropriations Committee,

*The University of Maryland, Student Government Association* supports HB573 in establishing the Access to Mental Health Advisory Committee in Higher Education. This bill is important because it prioritizes mental health in college-aged students.

Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Shivani Sidh and I am the Deputy Director of Governmental Affairs for the University of Maryland Student Government Association. I respectfully request a favorable vote on HB573.

As college students, we are faced with various types of stressors. Between completing homework and preparing for exams, planning for our futures, and managing extracurriculars, it can be incredibly difficult to take care of mental health. This is especially true for underclassmen, who are highly susceptible to encountering mental health difficulties. This often occurs as a result of the fact that they are independently navigating the new and complex world of higher education.

Last spring, I attempted to acquire counseling after learning that the University provided eight free sessions. After calling the health center, however, I was put off from doing so, as I discovered the long delays and time constraints that I would face. First, I endured a long wait time on the call itself. When I was finally connected to a representative, I was told that I would only be able to schedule an appointment after approximately two weeks. In inquiring further about the scheduling process, I learned that students are only given eight sessions over the course of twelve months.

Maryland's lack of adequate mental health resources and excess of complications for college students is not a matter of inconvenience, but rather an example of the profound need for additional support. Given this, the Access to Mental Health Advisory Committee must be established.

I respectfully request a favorable vote on HB573.

Thank you,



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