



**Testimony in opposition to
House Bill 1224: Public Schools - Medical and Psychological Treatment in
School-Based Health Centers and Public Schools - Parental Notice**

House Health and Government Operations Committee

House Ways and Means Committee

Position: Oppose

March 14, 2023

Strong Schools Maryland is a network of education advocates dedicated to ensuring the full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Since our inception in 2016, we have been committed to the realization of World-Class Schools for every student in our state. In 2023, this means supporting the full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint. **Strong Schools Maryland urges an unfavorable vote on House Bill 1224: Public Schools - Medical and Psychological Treatment in School-Based Health Centers and Public Schools - Parental Notice.**

Maryland has been and continues to work to ensure students, families, and school community members have a fair say about the direction our schools are trending in. Calls for "parental notice" like the ones in this bill are not any true measure of parental right, but rather about expanding even further the power small sects of Maryland parents (wealthy, well-connected, those whose time is unburdened by family-sustaining work and the complications of racism, poverty, xenophobia, and ableism) are able to exert over a system of public education that has been underfunded and hampered for generations.

House Bill 1224 describes itself as advancing the rights of parents, but instead contains the following provisions, ranging from unnecessary to harmful:

- Requires that any healthcare professional in a public school who provides a health service to a student must notify the student's parent or guardian of any consultation, diagnosis, or treatment provided to the student.
 - Challenges Maryland's current law governing a minor's ability to give informed consent for care.
- Makes the Maryland General Assembly an ally of all manner of abusive parents/guardians by finding that no information about the health and well-being of a minor should be withheld from the child's parent/guardian.
 - Poses conflicts for mandated reporters of child abuse in schools when the abuse is coming from the student's home; undermines the authority of public schools to act *in loco parentis*.

Our country is in the midst of a national youth mental health crisis. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that while there have been considerable measures taken to address adult mental health issues post-pandemic, there are often considerable gaps in capacity to serve youth and families.¹ In Maryland specifically, the Anne E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count data shows that in 2020, 12.8% of children and teens experienced anxiety or depression.² Further, LGBTQ+ students are more likely to experience mental health challenges, but less likely to receive help. One survey found that 60% of LGBTQ youth who wanted mental health care in the past year were not able to get it.³ School-based health programs are working to expand and utilize existing services to address these issues; however, the risks associated with this bill could actually worsen these statistics as students may not feel comfortable or safe sharing information with parents.

As outlined in the Fiscal and Policy Note, Chapter 743 of 2021 lowered the age for a minor to give informed consent in certain situations to a minor who is at

¹ [U.S. HHS](#)

² [Anne E. Casey Foundation](#)

³ [The Trevor Project](#)

least age 12.⁴ This was codified for a reason, yet this bill conflicts with students' rights to autonomy and privacy.

Strong Schools Maryland works to build power with directly impacted Marylanders—including a diverse range of parents in every corner of the state—to ensure we can collectively shape the World-Class system of education we're stringing for. House Bill 1224 will not get us there; it will complicate and harm the already complex journey we face to create globally competitive schools for all students.

For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 1224.

*For more information, contact Maddie Long:
maddie@strongschoolsmaryland.org*

⁴ [HB 1224 Fiscal and Policy Note](#)