



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
House Bill 375
Education – Coaches – Mental Health First Aid Training
March 9, 2023
Favorable with Amendments

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on House Bill 375. The bill requires various educational segments to develop and/or offer mental health first aid training to coaches in their athletic programs.

With the rise of individuals suffering from mental health illnesses, particularly issues that can be exacerbated by the demands of training and competition, it is important for athletic coaches and trainers across the University System of Maryland (USM) to approach athletes with a more holistic approach. Stressors from performance, work, academics, and other factors have the potential to cause emotional disturbances that could lead to declined mental health. The athletic population is more likely to experience an increased amount of stressors due to their performance requirements on top of other life changes. The USM recognizes that every athlete is potentially at risk to experience stressors that could lead to emotional disturbances.

However, “**Mental Health First Aid**” is a proprietary training course delivered by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing that teaches participants about mental health and substance-use issues. The USM understands that the sponsor’s goal is for athletic coaches to have this knowledge and the ability to recognize and respond, “*to indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress, including depression, trauma, violence, youth suicide, and substance abuse.*”

The use of the phrase “mental health first aid” may signal a requirement to use the National Council for Mental Wellbeing’s program, which is cost prohibitive for most USM institutions.

The USM requests that the phrase “*mental health first aid*” be changed to “*mental wellness training,*” thereby preserving the intent of House Bill 375 without binding institutions to using the National Council for Mental Wellbeing’s program.

Thank you for allowing the USM to share our thoughts regarding House Bill 375.



About the University System of Maryland

The University System of Maryland (USM)—one system made up of twelve institutions, three regional centers, and a central office—awards eight out of every ten bachelor’s degrees in the State of Maryland. The USM is governed by a Board of Regents, comprised of twenty-one members from diverse professional and personal backgrounds. The chancellor, Dr. Jay Perman, oversees and manages the operations of USM. However, each constituent institution is run by its own president who has authority over that university. Each of USM’s 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes Historically Black Colleges and Universities, comprehensive institutions, research universities, and the country’s largest public online institution.