



**Testimony in support of
House Bill 375: Education – Coaches – Mental Health First Aid Training**

**Appropriations Committee
Ways and Means Committee
Position: Favorable**

March 9, 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. **Strong Schools Maryland urges a favorable vote on House Bill 375: Education – Coaches – Mental Health First Aid Training.**

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future envisions a World-Class system of public schools for our state’s students. This includes targeted investment in mental and behavioral health services, particularly to students who lack access to adequate healthcare. The Blueprint expanded school-based health centers and increased State funding for local school systems to train school staff to recognize student behavioral health issues and assist local school systems with their training programs. This bill supports the vision of the Blueprint by equipping more school staff with the tools needed to support the mental health of students under their supervision.

House Bill 375:

- Requires the development of guidelines for public schools and higher education institutions to train coaches in providing mental health first aid; and
- Requires each public school and higher education institutions in Maryland to provide mental health first aid training to coaches.

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 Athletes face many stressors, like perfectionism, threat of injury, and even fear. Sports can provoke new - or exacerbate existing - mental health issues in student athletes, thus the need for informed and trained coaches to respond to student mental health health crises.³

The Blueprint makes investments across all public schools to pre-emptively and responsively address school community behavioral and mental health needs, including trauma informed care. Adding additional mental health resources in our schools will only strengthen our commitment to providing safe and successful World-Class schools.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 375.

*For more information, contact Maddie Long:
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¹ [U.S. HHS](#)

² [Anne E. Casey Foundation](#)

³ [National Federation of State High School Associations](#)