



February 28, 2023

TESTIMONY OF NICOLE HARLOCK, PRESIDENT
UNIVERSITY OF BALTIMORE, STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

HB573 - A BILL CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ACCESS TO
MENTAL HEALTHCARE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Chair Delegate Ben Barnes, Vice Chair Delegate Mark S. Chang, and Distinguished Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

My name is Nicole Harlock, and I am the President of the University of Baltimore's Student Government Association (UBSGA), representing the interests of our students.

The UBSGA strongly urges you to support House Bill 573, *Maryland Higher Education Commission – Access to Mental Health Advisory Committee – Establishment*.

The cost of medical coverage and healthcare services is exorbitantly high and ever-increasing, and students are feeling these impacts on not only their physical health, but also their mental health. For many students in higher education, basic healthcare services are out of reach due to lack of funds and the aid that is offered through their schools is minimal at best.

At the University of Baltimore a majority of mental health services are provided through the "Student Assistance Program" by the Office of Student Support, which works through a third-party contractor to deliver mental health services to students. Through this service, students can access five (5) free counseling sessions *per issue*, after which students are expected to pay out-of-pocket for these sessions, which is not always feasible for students who are struggling with conditions such as depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues that require long-term support.

Taking a deeper look at funding allocated towards mental health services for students in higher education throughout the University System of Maryland (USM) will help to create a more equitable and inclusive access to services for college/university students. The establishment of this Committee is the first step in the process to uplifting the students in USM to being the best versions of themselves and making the positive changes in the state that this body sets out to do each day.

It is for the above reasons that the University of Baltimore's Student Government Association asks for a favorable report on House Bill 573.

Thank you for your consideration of the views of the University of Baltimore's Student Government Association.

Sincerely,

Nicole Harlock

UBSGA President