
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

**Testimony by
Dr. Brad Phillips, Executive Director
February 28, 2023**

**HB573 – Maryland Higher Education Commission - Access to Mental Health Advisory
Committee - Establishment**

POSITION: Favorable

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland's 16 community colleges, supports this legislation and thanks Delegate Bofo for their sponsorship.

Poor mental health hinders a student's academic success and leads to high dropout rates. Community colleges, who represent a very vulnerable segment of postsecondary students, are particularly concerned with getting these students back on track. The COVID-19 pandemic that shuttered the nation's colleges and universities has had a particular impact on the mental health of our students. Studies chronicled by the Hunt Institute and the Maryland Chronicle of Higher Education are showing that isolation has increased depression, anxiety disorders, drug use and suicides at alarming rates.

We thank the sponsor for the inclusion of a representative from the Community Colleges in the Commission. In addition to providing a forum to identify barriers, share policies and procedures and institute best practices for students in need of mental health assistance, enactment of this legislation will assist in identifying workforce shortages in mental health fields of study.

MACC requests a favorable report on HB573.