

Committees: Education, Energy and the Environment

Testimony on: HB573

Position: Favorable

24 February 2023

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and the members of the Appropriations Committee,

The University of Maryland, Student Government Association supports HB573 in establishing the Access to Mental Health Advisory Committee in Higher Education. This bill is important because it prioritizes mental health in college aged students.

My name is Isha Yardi and I'm the Director of Health and Wellness at the University of Maryland Student Government Association. I am also a member of the University Health Center's Student Health Advisory Committee. I've worked extensively over the past three years with our university's Counseling Center and Behavioral Health Services to understand the landscape of mental health on campus. Since our return from virtual learning, we've seen a tremendous increase in the need for accessible and timely mental health resources for students. The pandemic has created a number of unprecedented personal and academic challenges for college students, and now more than ever, students require the active support of mental health infrastructure on campus. This sentiment has been echoed by the countless conversations I've had with student coalitions, focus groups, and even close friends struggling to access mental health services in time to meet their needs. As a student who interacts intimately with these systems of care, I am a first-hand witness to the need for targeted, expert-driven guidance on how to improve mental health on our campus.

HB573 establishes an Access to Mental Health Advisory Committee, which would include counselors, clinicians, and other specialists who would develop personalized recommendations for how to improve mental health services at universities in the University System of Maryland. This bill recognizes the urgent need for research around mental health resources that resonate with students' needs and will hopefully expedite system reform by creating a framework for best practices to be developed and disseminated. Students should feel unequivocally supported by the resources available to them on campus, especially in the wake of a national youth mental health crisis. HB573 is a crucial step in the right direction to improve mental health services for students. I respectfully request a favorable report on HB573.

Thank you,



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